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# Language and Language Teaching

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# Evaluation: Is it the Cane that Guides or the Dog that Guards?<sup>1</sup>

*Geetha Durairajan*

## **Nature of teaching, learning and evaluation outside education**

All of us as living beings teach someone something at some time in our lives. Caregivers and parents do this much more than others. They teach children to tie shoelaces, plait hair, tie ribbons, make tea/coffee, answer the door bell, eat without spilling, etc.; an adult may teach another adult how to cook, sew, knit, or drive a car. The list is endless. This, as Gardner (1999) beautifully described it, is an education that took place long before there were formal institutions called schools. If we think about the nature of such teaching, we realize that there are no lesson plans or lectures. Teaching is implicit, either by example, or a simple “Come, I will show you what to do”. Examples are provided, but the example (and by implication the teaching) differs from person to person; teaching is fine-tuned, calibrated and individualized. This ‘individualization’, needs an implicit ‘evaluation’.

As an illustration, I am going to use the example of a concept I had to teach to both a three-year-old child, and an adult. The concept was the story behind the well known painting from the Bhagavad Gita<sup>2</sup> (in which Krishna is a charioteer and Arjuna—one of the five Pandava brothers—is depicted as dejected and visibly upset), and its significance. A young child asked me in his first language, Tamil, “ithu ennathu?” (what is this?). I simply told him the story of the Gita in a simplified form; about uncles and cousins who took what belonged to one set of brothers, and how this one brother (Arjuna) did not want to fight with his relatives, and how

Krishna told him that when someone does something wrong, others, even if they are younger than him, have the right to make that ‘wrong’ known. A British friend (with an interest in Hindu mythology) asked me a similar question, “Can you tell me something about this famous picture and what it represents?” In response I gave her a small but quick ‘lecture’ on how the horses represent the five senses, the chariot the body, the charioteer the soul, Arjuna the mind, etc. The stimulus behind the question was the same picture, but the two listeners or learners heard different versions of the answer, one a simplified tale, and the other a symbolic interpretation.

*The most important role of evaluation within education is not to do the job of gatekeeping, weeding out the ‘have-nots’ from the ‘haves’. Evaluation of this nature is like a dog that barks at those outside the gates to guard and protect its own territory; some are allowed to enter, others are not. The gatekeeping exercise has its own merits (in entrance examinations), but not within the context of teaching and learning.*

The tale and the interpretation were both ‘honest’ teachings, which were genuinely learner-centred. Although this ‘learner-centredness’ happens all the time, it is not possible without an inbuilt evaluation. The nature of teaching (what to teach, and how) is based on an assessment of learner needs; the evaluation is, however, minus any grading or

marking. The judgment is not a 'look at you, you don't even know'. It is a convivial evaluation (Durairajan, 2003) (with care and tolerance, whose only purpose is to help someone learn) that enables individualized learning to happen. It is like the two hands that go around a small candle flame and help it to continue burning and not go out, like the two hands in the logo of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

### **Teaching, learning and evaluation within education**

A lot of teaching and learning takes place in classrooms, and for this a range of tasks and activities are used. What different children or students take away from a particular task need not be the same. Teaching may be whole class oriented, but learning is individualized. We acknowledge the fact that teacher input and student intake may be different, and that individual abilities may vary, but this variation is rarely echoed in the testing that happens in classrooms. At the end of the fifth or the eighth unit of teaching, a test is administered (or a quarterly or half-yearly examination conducted) to all students on the same day, at the same time; they are tested for the same information, and evaluated using the same criteria/scoring key. Marks or grades are given, added up, and as part of internal assessment, these 'measurements' feature in some form in the final summative evaluation for certification. When deciding what, when and how to teach, the teacher is perceived as empowered, as having a 'sense of plausibility' (Prabhu, 1987). But this ability to select, modify, adopt or adapt materials is rarely evoked in classroom testing. The freedom to extend the duration of the test, or conduct the test separately on a different day is not made available to the teacher. Formative evaluation that should serve an educational purpose becomes an administrative and disciplinary exercise meant to either ensure attendance in class, or show marks registers as filled, or worse still, pass or retain students. We

'discipline and punish' (Foucault, 1978/1991) through examinations: The teacher's knowledge of her students is continuous and comprehensive, but that does not get recognised, let alone valued.

The most important role of evaluation within education is not to do the job of gatekeeping, weeding out the 'have-nots' from the 'haves'. Evaluation of this nature is like a dog that barks at those outside the gates to guard and protect its own territory; some are allowed to enter, others are not. The gatekeeping exercise has its own merits (in entrance examinations), but not within the context of teaching and learning.

Evaluation in education is a very different kind of a dog; it is the 'seeing eye dog', that serves as a guide dog for the blind. Instead of using this image, which is a little alien to us in India, I have chosen to alternate it with the white cane used by a visually-impaired person that provides mobility, enables movement, and aids navigation.

Genuine formative evaluation has to fulfil a pedagogic role. Evaluation that is marked or graded, that is entered in report cards, is stressful and creates tension; it simply fulfils an administrative, certification-oriented purpose. In the context of public education, such a certification is unavoidable, but it should not become the predominant motivation behind all testing. The two kinds of evaluation can be differentiated; one is development-oriented and academic-purposed, the other administrative and judgmental.

Academic-purposed evaluation aims to capture the indicators of development in the child. But such a development (an integral part of learning) is traumatic for every individual. To understand the nature of this 'individualized trauma', let us examine classroom teaching and learning a little more closely. At some point in our educational career, we have studied that 'learning' is change in behaviour (Bloom, Hastings & Maduas, 1971). 'Learning' here, is not reduced to a behaviouristic change to be reinforced positively

or negatively. Instead, the focus is on the individual change in perceptions, actions, and even beliefs. But it is neither instant nor immediate. It is not like the switching on of a bulb! Learning is painful and time-consuming! We only need to contemplate on the time and effort it takes for a child to learn to eat food without spilling, or tie shoelaces. Also, learning never happens at the same time on the same day for the whole class. It happens incrementally, individually, and very slowly. A single test cannot capture this individualized learning.

As an example, let us think of language classrooms where large quantum of learning happens. Students have to learn what to say, when to say it, why and to whom, (rules of appropriateness). They also need to learn when to use 'since' and 'for' (rules of grammar), how to use words correctly, how to write with coherence, or read and comprehend a text. None of this happens overnight! If it did, we would not be teaching the use of discourse markers, word-meaning, and even the use of articles and tenses at the college level. In spite of this, even at the school level, in every test, we deduct marks for 'mistakes'.

Language learning is described as developmental, incremental and on going, but we expect perfection at every stage of language performance.

When we teach a child something outside of education, every single milestone is celebrated: The first step, the first word, the first plate of food eaten without assistance, etc. This celebration has to become a part of educational academic evaluation. It will then be continuous and comprehensive, and at the same time, academic in its orientation.

This kind of 'individualized' evaluation, however, does not make life easy for a teacher: there are 40 or more students in a class, a vast syllabus to cover, 'portions' to finish. However, if any

teacher is asked to think for just 5 minutes, and identify the 8 children who need help, or the 8 children who are 'good', there is no hesitation. Every teacher knows his/her students. This 'knowing' is 'academic' evaluation; it captures the little things that a learner achieves. For a child, learning how to read, distinguishing the cover page of a book from the text inside, or pointing to the first and the last word on a page is a big achievement (Mariotti & Homan, 2005). Over two weeks, a child may learn to use a word with a lot more confidence; these 'small gains' (Tharu, 1981) are difficult to capture in a test, but are recorded in the mind of the teacher, and documented if required, in a teacher's diary.

### **Alternative evaluative possibilities**

There are many kinds of teacher observations that can provide evaluative knowledge. First and foremost is the natural observation that happens in the look of an eye, or body language. Then there is informal question-answer sessions in which a teacher may note things such as "Sharanya is trying to answer, and although Karthik is silent, he is nodding". A third level consists of the small tests given by the teacher, and finally there are the slotted, inevitable, promotion/certification examinations.

The summative examination paper can also be used for academic or educational purposes, as a guiding cane. The whole class/group/individual can be given a feedback; but what we do with the answer papers after we enter the marks is crucial. As teachers, we can use it to improve our teaching, or tell students what their strengths and weaknesses are.

Class test papers can be used to provide both teacher and peer feedback. With training, self-evaluation is also a possibility. If evaluation criteria are made known, then the evaluation itself becomes a teaching exercise for students to not only learn but also observe and evaluate themselves.



All classroom experiences are instances where developmental evaluation can and does happen. This is particularly true of multiple-choice or short answer type questions. A discussion of the possible answers and explanations enables individualized learning to happen, and also provides the teacher with insights into the workings of her students' minds. Teachers only need to ask, "so why did you choose this answer?" (without giving away the right answer), and listen to the explanations to later enable a 'change in behaviour.' Academic evaluation can be used as a thinking tool, "why did I answer this, why is X not the answer?" An additional point is that in multilingual contexts such as India, this thinking tool need not be monolingual (Durairajan, 2009, Mathew, 2008). The guard dog or cane image, with reference to English in India, applies also to the language used. In classrooms where L1 is predominant or more enabled, language is often perceived as a 'problem'. It can instead be used as a resource to help children go 'meta' in that language; it can also become the language of discussion to enable thinking and reflection.

The language of thinking and reflection in India is often, for many students, their first language; we, with our baggage of 'colonialism', guard against the use of that language; instead, it can be used as a prop, as a guide, to help children. In the twenty-first century India, with the implementation of the Right to Education Act and the need for inclusive education, this becomes even more crucial. A teacher cannot afford to evaluate the mere presence or absence of a capability; evaluation needs to function as an enabling and empowering tool.

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 'Opportunities, Options and Challenges in English Language Education' Seminar at RIESI Bangalore in February 2011.

2. This reference is to a part of the Indian epic, the Mahabharata, that deals with the war between two clans, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, who were also cousins. In the tale, the Pandavas have to fight the Kauravas for what was rightfully seen as their property; Arjuna (one of the Pandavas) is dejected and upset at the beginning of the war at the idea of having to fight with his own uncles, cousins, and other relatives. As his charioteer, Krishna advises him and that 'advice' comprises the Bhagavad-Gita.

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# Choosing Texts for Teachers

*Namrita Batra*

## Introduction

Many of us struggle with the task of helping children learn how to read and write, and become proficient readers who enjoy reading. That many teachers are also not proficient readers and do not enjoy reading as much as they 'should' is not very surprising for those of us who work closely with them.

Capacity building of teachers is a prominent area of work at Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre (VBERC) Udaipur. An important facet of this has been generating self-learning materials for teachers in various areas like pedagogy, child psychology, disciplinary concepts, etc. Over time we have realized that we also need material which helps teachers engage with their own reading and writing ability.

An effort in this direction was made by us when we designed a certification course for teachers of alternative schools of rural areas in Udaipur district; the jaded reading and writing abilities of these teachers stood in the way of their becoming both independent learners as well as better teachers.

## Teachers of alternative schools

The teachers of alternative schools belonged to the communities in which they were teaching. Most had not been able to complete their school education and their qualifications varied from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Moreover, their day-to-day activities gave them little opportunity to read and write on a regular basis and in any substantial manner; reading activities being restricted to

reading infrequently the local newspaper. Their mother tongues were either Mewari or Vagri, however all spoke and understood Hindi. Hindi was also the medium of education in the schools in which they taught.

Simply put, we wanted to help teachers read with understanding, insight and discrimination. This involved helping teachers examine and understand not only the chain of events, the information and ideas that were explicitly mentioned in the text but also the ideas and emotions that were implicit in the writing. It also

*We also felt that as teachers the readers must engage with the texts with children as their protagonists. The texts we chose to do this depict the childhood of a cross section of children with inherent respect for their struggles and thoughts.*

involved helping the reader attach her perspectives/opinions to what she was reading. It was also clear to us that improvement in reading ability requires reading more and more and so while the course should be able to generate interest in reading and help teachers read more regularly, any substantial improvement in reading would occur only if teachers were able to continue this process.

Thus, while an important part of our job was to help the teachers engage with their reading ability, the flip side to it was generating interest in reading itself. Choosing texts which could do both for the course was thus an area of concern



for us. In this article I focus on the things we kept in mind when we were choosing these texts.

### Selecting texts

The selection was centred on four major issues: The basic issue was 'What kind of texts would help improve reading ability?' The other three involved much more time, effort and discussion and they were: 'What would be interesting for teachers to read?', 'What 'should' be of interest to teachers?' and 'What picture of society and human endeavor should the texts engage with and what should be the tone of this engagement?' The last was perhaps the most significant realization for us: Every time you select a text and use it for public transaction, you are making a moral choice.

We understood that the answer to the first question involved giving texts which challenged the current reading abilities of the teachers (borrowing from Krashen's concept of Comprehensible Input) and that the degree of challenge should go up as ability increases. The length of the text was one clear indicator of the amount of challenge that a text can present and most of the texts ranged between 1500-4000 words. We also found that in many cases average words per sentence in the shorter texts were fewer than those in longer texts. Another facet of challenge was the variety of genre we introduced. These included stories, poems, plays, essays, letters, posters, advertisements etc. Yet another was being comfortable with not only narrative but also descriptive, expository and argumentative styles of writing, and these no doubt also depended on the variety of genre. Another way in which we answered this question was by introducing readers to writing styles of various distinguished authors - Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Amrita Pritam, Mahasweta Devi, Bhishma Sahni, Rajendra Yadav, Phanishwarnath 'Renu' etc.; each with their individual styles of narration and

description presented their readers with a unique challenge and also held their interest. We had been told that texts with higher 'idea level density' (ratio between number of ideas and number of words in a text) would be more challenging. Though we never calculated the density for texts we found that texts which were written by authors like those mentioned above as well as those which can be categorized as academic writing were more challenging for teachers to read. Simultaneously, we started thinking about what kind of texts would interest the teachers.

*And texts which engage with life- its joys, sorrows, victories and defeats- would always hold appeal and would interest our teachers too.*

We had heard many a time that reader interest is dependent on whether the text is placed in her context. Initially, we understood the teachers' context to include their physical environment - the geography, flora and fauna and their ways of life (occupations, marriages, relationships, customs etc). While we felt that texts which are sensitive to this context might aid comprehension, we also started realizing that their 'context', does not define their boundaries of interest. For all of us can think of things that we find interesting to read even though they are not within our context and inversely might find some texts un-engaging even though they are. For instance, our teachers might find it interesting to read about communities with practices and mores different from theirs and find reading about various farming practices un-interesting. Thus, we realized that it is not difficult to construct a context for what is interesting for us; our ability to use what we know about the world and abstract about what we do not know, aids this process.

### The issue of context

We also soon realized that we were using an incomplete definition of context. Integral to the meaning of context are also the emotions and values we experience as human beings in our lives. These in fact create a context which is universal and not bound by geographies; the love of a parent for her child, the romance between two human beings, the intrinsic human need for freedom, etc are some examples of these. We found that literature speaks of such universal contexts and whether the text is placed in a rural context or not is of little consequence. And texts which engage with life - its joys, sorrows, victories and defeats - would always hold appeal and would interest our teachers too.

The texts we thus chose sometimes took the readers to faraway places, sometimes into the distant past and sometimes to people whose lives were similar to their own. They were both a mirror in which readers could see their reflections, and also a window through which they could explore the world around them.

We encountered some other questions while trying to choose texts which catered to the interest of our readers. Most of our teachers were young, adult males who enjoyed a certain amount of 'action'. Many of them would quote their favorite movies to be action packed ones, of Mithun Chakraborty and Govinda and a certain set of expletives which would be considered 'uncultured' were a part of their register. What kind of space could the course give to such experiences? Would not our readers also find themes like 'romance' engaging?

We felt that it was important for the texts to give space to the ideas, interests and experiences of a young adult population and again decided to use literature to walk the thin line. *Munari* and *Godhan*'s romance in Phanishwarnath Renu's *Panchlight*, the superstition and ritual around the apparent killing of *kabri billi* in Bhagwati Charan Verma's *Prayashchit* and the

political drama in Harishankar Parsai's *Viklang Rajneeti* all gave space to the emotions, aspirations and also register of this age group.

Another matter which is noteworthy while talking about reader interest is that while we gave space to a variety of genre, we did use stories more, partly because we found the teachers engaging much more actively with them and partly because so many of them are available.

Lastly, the texts were chosen keeping in mind that the 'Hindi' being used in them was close to the one spoken by the teachers in their day-day life.

The third question we engaged with was whether there are certain types of texts that we 'should' give teachers to read. Since the course was meant for teachers who are also development workers in their communities, should we not introduce teachers to academic writing in education, social change and development? Also, should not texts give a special place to children's views, experiences and feelings?

We also felt that as teachers the readers must engage with the texts with children as their protagonists. The texts we chose to do this depict the childhood of a cross section of children with inherent respect for their struggles and thoughts. Also, the innocence of childhood does not stand in the way of depicting children as thinking individuals. Mahashweta Devi's *Kyon-Kyon Chhori*, Bhishma Sahni's *Gulelbaaz Larka*, Jaishankar Prasad's *Chhota Jadugar*, Rajendra Yadav's *Bhay* were a part of the course. We also felt that as teachers we must introduce the readers to academic writing in education, but since a separate paper on the 'learning processes of children' was being planned, we did not include such texts. However, to complement their role as development workers we did try to introduce the readers to thoughts of some prominent thinkers like Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi on development.

However, we were not successful in this direction and very few such texts were a part of the course.

The fourth and last question essentially asked us to give a moral framework to our work. We came to the consensus that the picture of society envisaged by the Indian Constitution should guide the framework to our work. The central tenets of the Constitution - freedom, equality and justice - are the lens we have used to look at society. At the same time we were also clear that the texts we chose would explore social realities, understand homes, communities and the world and not preach the right way to live. So some texts we have chosen depict exploitation and struggle in various unequal power relationships like-employer-employee, man-woman, adult-child, rich man-poor man, upper castes-lower castes etc. Some others celebrate human endeavor and human struggle against wrongs. The texts depict both men and women as capable of being right and wrong and also explore the relationship between human beings and their environment. Ultimately there has been an attempt made to give readers the space to explore various ideas and develop their own leanings.

## Conclusion

While this entire engagement was about choosing texts for adults, we felt that there was a lot to be learnt about choosing texts for even children from this entire process. In fact there might be things that we can add to this list when it comes to children, but might find it very difficult to remove any.

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# The Impact of Content: English Textbook Designing in India

*Santosh Kumar Mahapatra*

## Introduction

Human consciousness plays a huge role in the formation of one's identity. In this regard, Vygotsky (1925) states that social activities explain the emergence of consciousness in human beings. So social can also be an artifact and thus, may also be 'a regulatory agency that channels human behavior and thought' (Ramanathan, 2005, p. 25). Considering that schools can communicate the legitimate forms of truth through prescribed textbooks, and that the English language controls and moulds power relations in contemporary Indian society, critically looking into how texts are chosen and tasks are designed in English textbooks in India may explain their possible impact on the formation of student identity.

## English textbook designing in India

Dat (2008), in a review of English textbooks used in South-East Asia, points out that English textbook designers in the region "seriously lack professional course developers and that there has not been adequate training in materials development" (p. 276). The scenario is not very different in India, even though there have been some positive developments in the field in the last few years. However, having only a handful of trained experts in the area does not really help the cause. To make matters worse, quite a few so-called 'trained experts' prefer writing textbooks for reputed publishing houses because of the huge financial benefits. This leaves the state as well as the central educational boards

(such as NCERT) with fewer options. Given that a large percentage of textbook writers at a state level is unaware of what Littlejohn (1992) calls 'What is there', 'What is required' and 'What is implied', i.e. the basic theories and practices of textbook designing, quite a few of them choose easily available texts, follow the design of a few already existing textbooks, and develop some traditionally used task and activity

*Basically, those who have access to social comforts, luxuries, advanced technology, books, magazines, etc., can easily and happily identify themselves with the characters presented in the texts. On the other hand, students from backward classes who have very little or no access to the facilities mentioned above, may not have many characters and contexts to identify with.*

types. With pre-service training for English teachers offering little help with materials designing, teaching and learning become dawdling and uninteresting.

## Textbook content and politics of class and caste

Morarji (2004), in an analysis of the Environmental Studies textbooks prescribed by the NCERT, comments: "Lessons in textbooks are coded in ways which marginalize rural identity markers, and actively prescribe identities that are coded as urban middle-class". Morarji's

observations are very similar to that of Illaiah (1996), who claims that the course content is either unrelated to the cultural experiences of *dalit* students, or undervalues their educational experience, dignity and self-esteem. Such irregularities can also be found in English textbooks. However, it is surprising that the content and context in English textbooks have not drawn much attention for research, even though the fact remains that “English language proficiency in a globalizing India is an essential component of one’s cultural baggage....For the middle classes, English is a resource that must be defended and maintained at all costs” (Scrase, 2004, p.16).

There are several ways in which the selection of content for English textbooks can have a direct impact on the formation of identity of the learners. In India, students from backward classes and minority communities often find themselves at a disadvantage. Their community, belief systems, socio-cultural practices, etc., are either presented in a distorted manner, or excluded from the textbook altogether. Also, students coming from the dominant classes/communities to the classroom start forming a derogatory picture of these unrepresented or badly represented classes/communities and of the people belonging to these communities. Basically, those who have access to social comforts, luxuries, advanced technology, books, magazines, etc., can easily and happily identify themselves with the characters presented in the texts. On the other hand, students from backward classes who have very little or no access to the facilities mentioned above, may not have many characters and contexts to identify with. For example, a chapter on Computers is prescribed for Class IX students in Odisha, where more than 60% of students are from backward classes.

As if the bias and ignorance in the content selection is not enough, the end-of-lesson tasks further complicate matters. The questions used

in these tasks often develop a sense of ‘right and wrong’, and ‘good and bad’ in students. In other words, they stealthily infuse “forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination” (Apple, 1990, p. 3). For example, a text talks about a female student from a slum who is given guava leaves boiled in water by her mother when she has fever. The questions at the end of lesson are asked in a way that makes the students believe that tablets and medicines prescribed by the doctors and available in the medical stores are ‘the only right kind’ of medicines. Again, if the text mentions that the girl’s mother does not take care of her, and beats her if she asks for clothes and other things, the end-of-lesson questions may portray

*Textbooks are mere tools in this practice of hegemony in which English as a cultural capital helps maintain the dominance of the middle and upper class over the underprivileged class. In this set-up, all the good intentions of the ‘education for all’ policy remain unattended.*

the mother as a villain, instead of looking at the pathetic condition she is in, and the struggles she has to undergo every day to earn a living. Moreover, the questions can sometimes create a picture of what a ‘good and ideal’ woman is expected to do.

If the inclusion of Western or foreign texts at an early stage of English education brings cultural alienation (e.g. NCERT Class V textbook *Marigold*), texts where the social practices of students are presented in a negative light does more damage to their self-esteem and motivation. They become apprehensive about their socio-cultural identity, and try to either acquire a pseudo-identity of higher classes, or end up feeling a sense of depression, shame, anger and rebelliousness. Similarly, one’s sense



of right, wrong, good, bad, clean, hygienic, and social acceptance, etc., is also shaped by English textbooks, because of the power, prestige and glamour attached with its learning. Ultimately, what the students start believing in is exactly what the politically dominant class wants them to believe. Such beliefs get fossilized; then the individual gradually loses the power of questioning; and finally, he/she gets assimilated into the belief system of the dominant class.

### **Government and private school English textbooks**

The government-private divide is perhaps the most obvious factor when it comes to class politics in ELT in India; NCERT, CBSE, ICSE and the state educational boards, all produce their own English textbooks. As I have discussed earlier, textbook designing at the central level involves more expertise than in the states. However, there has been a long and inconclusive debate about the validity of a national curriculum. It is virtually impossible to cater to the needs of a large variety of students from different linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds through one textbook at one level. Moreover, the inclusion of a high percentage of foreign English texts in the English textbooks, such as in the ICSE (Classes IX and X) and NCERT (*'Marigold'* for Class V), is ridiculous and unreasonable.

The state-level textbook designing in India has improved over the last decade. But issues based on caste, class, gender, sexuality, politics, religion, etc., have remained forbidden territories for textbook writers, and 'critical thinking' has been confined to garnishing policy materials. So there is little scope for preparing students to challenge the unequal and undemocratic practices prevalent in Indian societies.

Like the elitist set-up of private English medium schools, the English textbooks used in such schools are often designed by well known

materials designers and produced by renowned publishing houses. The absence of a rule emphasizing the use of only government-produced textbooks encourages these practices. It is not only the layout and price of the books, but also the texts and tasks presented in them that ensure the exclusion of students from underprivileged backgrounds. Textbooks are mere tools in this practice of hegemony in which English as a cultural capital helps maintain the dominance of the middle and upper class over the underprivileged class. In this set-up, all the good intentions of the 'education for all' policy remain unattended.

### **Decolonizing and democratizing English textbooks**

The politics of English textbooks is a part of what Ramanathan (2005) calls 'assumptions nexus'. She defines it in the following terms:

"...everything in class-related conventions that inform how and why particular class groups live and make the choices they do in almost every realm of everyday existence, including those related to schooling, child-rearing, literacy practices at home, clothing and public appearances, food, how money gets spent, body sizes, weight, health, nutrition and hairdos and, most importantly, in the present case, opting for fluency in English (sometimes through an EM education)" (p. 37).

So changing the writing practice of textbooks is a huge challenge because all the stakeholders in the decision-making position are part of the societal structure it is based on. However, there is a possibility of changing the socially generated and constructed consciousness through a critical curricular pattern based on democratic ideologies. Introducing critical thinking components in training programmes for textbook writers and teachers may make a good start. However, it will be better to have such components in pre-service programmes, to



ensure that they get a solid foundation in critical thinking. The next step could be making the presence of experts working in government universities mandatory during textbook designing programmes at the state level. There should be restrictions on people who work for private publishing houses while drawing fat salaries from government treasuries. Also, it could be of great help to have a national certification body to monitor the writing of English textbooks in the country. There should be clear guidelines against which all the content and tasks of textbooks should be examined and passed before getting published. Efforts should be made to pitch texts and tasks on a democratically representative ground so that they promote communal harmony, mutual respect, nationhood, and above all, critical thinking. This may lead to the realization of an NCF (2005) dream- "...nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country" (p. viii).

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# Multilingualism and Bilingualism for Language Teachers

Asha Iyer

## Introduction

A language teacher, if not all teachers, can work successfully with two or even more languages. In many CBSE schools including the Kendriya Vidyalayas, English is the medium of education, therefore, it seems only pedagogically desirable and psychologically advantageous for both the students and the teachers to work with English as well as the other languages being taught in the school or represented among the children. Unless a teacher treats the languages of the children as a resource, she may not be able to understand their output, and may not be pedagogically very effective.

## Why should we do it?

Children in class one have a good knowledge of their mother tongue. Also, in each classroom there is an average of 4-6 language groups, depending upon the State. Let me explain—in

*Unless a teacher treats the languages of the children as a resource, she may not be able to understand their output, and may not be pedagogically very effective.*

the States, we may find some children who speak the regional language of that State as well as some other languages, such as Tamil and some other languages in Tamil Nadu; Bangla as well as some other languages in West Bengal, and Marathi and some other languages in Maharashtra. The second group may belong to the neighbouring States—a Marathi group in

places adjoining Maharashtra such as Nepanagar or Burhanpur of Madhya Pradesh, or an Oriya Group in Chhattisgarh, or a Hindi Group in Punjab along with Punjabi and Haryanavi.

In such situations a language teacher can do really well if he/she knows some basics of the language concerned. It is always easy to approach a child in his/her own language. Moreover, children, especially in primary classes, feel closer to the teacher when he/she tries to say some words/simple expressions of their mother tongue and the language becomes a very impressive tool.

In primary classes, children have a difficult time adjusting to an alien language such as English. Most of our children are not conversant with English. If the teacher tries to speak in their own language or even says a few words, children feel at home. One important thing to note is, never joke about the mother tongue of children, or tease them about it. If you laugh at their language, they will hate you as well as the subject you are trying to teach, forever.

## How does it help?

Let us look at Maharashtra as the majority of my experiences come from the two Kendriya Vidyalayas of Bhusawal and Nepanagar. Nepanagar is situated at the border of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. While teaching in Nepanagar, I found students using words from Marathi while speaking to each other in Hindi. Their tone and expressions also resembled those

of Marathi. The remarkable thing was that for many of them, Marathi was not even their mother tongue! But I could hear expressions such as the following quite often when they tried to speak in Hindi:

1. *ye meraich hai.*

This mine only is.

This is mine only.

In Hindi it would be, *Ye meraa hii hai*. The use of *meraich* shows a Marathi influence.

2. *kaiko re!*

Why oh!

Why eh!

*kaiko* is used in Marathi in informal speech.

In writing, I found many ‘errors’ in the use of *matras* (symbols showing vowels and the length of time needed for their pronunciation), especially in the use of short and long ‘i’ and ‘u’. To correct such errors, a language teacher should first know why these happen. I examined the work of many students and discovered the following: They wrote the short sounds with a sign of the longer *matra* and vice versa. I listened carefully to the elders as well, and found that they also pronounced these sounds in a similar manner. One should understand that these are all ‘errors’ in the process of learning, and happen due to the language used around them, and children do eventually learn to write correctly. Thus, what we treat as mistakes and often punish our children for, are actually expected, and are simply an evidence of what they are learning from their environment.

### Then what did I do?

I searched for a Marathi-speaking parent and discussed the problem with him. He said it was all due to the use of the wrong *wilanti*, which in Marathi means *maatras*. Therefore, the word ‘hindu’, was pronounced *hinduu* in Hindi, and

*hiindu* in Marathi (the short ‘i’ became long and long ‘uu’ short). The children also wrote it as *hiindu* when writing in Hindi; after all, in Hindi we want them to write as they speak!

So I thought it over and came up with a very simple solution. It may seem silly, but it worked. I asked the students to exchange the *matras* they intended to write, therefore they wrote ‘i’ in place of the longer ‘ii’, and the longer ‘ii’ whenever they intended to write a small ‘i’. After a bit they caught up with it and came up with a similar solution for correcting their small ‘u’ and long ‘uu’.

*One important thing to note is, never joke about the mother tongue of children, or tease them about it. If you laugh at their language, they will hate you as well as the subject you are trying to teach, forever.*

### Aspirated Hindi consonants

Now let us look at a Tamil-speaking child who is in class one. She/he is either new to Hindi, or has just learnt a few words in it. How would a Hindi teacher make her/him say the *mahaapraan*, i.e. aspirated sounds? Aspirated sounds are produced with an extra puff of air. That is what makes *kaanaa*, meaning ‘one-eyed’ different from *khaanaa* meaning ‘food’. Tamil does NOT have aspirated sounds. If a teacher understands that what is involved in producing an aspirated sound is just an extra puff of air, she would be able to help her students a lot. In this case, early intervention also helps, for once the tongue and other relevant parts of the mouth become habituated to speaking in a certain manner, it will be very difficult to correct the pronunciation. Even our brain will refuse to accommodate the new way of pronunciation. The first two classes of the Primary is the **best time** to perform this task.

## Prior knowledge

Prior Knowledge is another obstacle in learning a new language, as we all know from our B.Ed. days. The language the child has acquired since the day she/he learnt to speak may pose some problems in the learning of an entirely new language.

For instance, in Tamil, there are three genders: masculine (M), feminine (F) and neuter (N) and in Hindi, we have only two.

In Tamil we have 3 forms of verbs to go with each gender, such as:

<i>avan poran</i>	<i>aval poral</i>	<i>adu poradu</i>
He goes	She goes	It goes

<i>wah jata hai</i>	<i>wah jati hai</i>	no separate words
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A child coming from a largely Tamil-speaking family will be flabbergasted! Where to put a chair or a table: In the masculine gender or in the feminine gender? In Tamil, both table and chair belong to the neuter gender, whereas in Hindi *kursii* (chair) is feminine but *mez* (table) masculine. My grandfather used to say:

*relgaadi roz subaha samay par aatii hai par sham ko pataa nahiin kyon der se aataa hai?*

“The Train is always on time in the morning; but I don’t know why it comes late in the evening?”

We could never make him understand the gender issue, and sometimes it would be hilarious just to listen to him and my grandmother talking to each other in Hindi, mixing all the genders! But we cannot laugh when our students do this; we have to teach them the correct rules. I do not suggest that all Indian languages should be learnt, just the ones that are spoken in the region or by the children in their respective classes, plus English.

I will relate one incident that my father told me. He had a Bengali friend. After their training,

they were posted to different stations. When they met after some time, my father asked him about his office, and he told my father that everything was okay but there was no *ghoraa* and *ghorii*.

My father was perplexed—why would a clerk need a *ghoraa* (horse) and a *ghorii* (mare) in an office? As some of you would have guessed, he simply meant *gharaa* ‘pitcher’ and not *ghoraa* ‘horse’; and *gharii* ‘watch’ and not *ghorii* ‘mare’.

Though this is a very good example, but it does not apply to a primary class where we have to be very careful not to let such situations get out of hand, or they might destroy the goodwill among the children. Everybody’s mother tongue is close to their hearts. Most of the children and parents are extremely sensitive to the issue of their language.

## Some fundamental steps

- Within a week an efficient teacher must know what the mother tongues of the children in her/his class are. On an average there will be 4-5 different language groups in one class. It would be a good idea to make a list.
- Make all the children speak or read loudly. Make notes of the letters or words which need attention.
- Group the children according to their mother tongue, e.g. 5- Marathi speaking; 6-local language; 9-Hindi; and so on.
- Casually, ask the children synonyms of simple words that will appear in the text. Ask questions such as:  
“What would you call a ‘chair’ in your language?”

Ask whether a word is masculine, feminine or neuter in gender. For this you may have to keep their age in mind. Therefore, in class 1 you may ask:

*Popularizing any language is a two-way affair; you learn and respect mine, and I will learn and respect yours! It is as easy as that! Look at small children living in a multilingual locality; they learn 3-5 languages effortlessly, and can as easily switch over from one to the other.*

*kursii chhotii hai ki chhotaa?*

Chair small FEM is or small MASC?

*ped ooncha hai ki oonchii?*

tree tall MASC is or tall FEM?

Asking these questions will encourage the children to think about these things; we can see that in English there is no change in the adjectives with the change of gender in the nouns.

Even in class 9, I had great difficulty in teaching the correct gender form of Hindi verbs to the Marathi, Tamil or Malayalam-speaking students, as they would mix them with the rules or norms of their own respective mother tongue.

I also did my best to instill respect for other languages in my students. Though they did not dare make fun of my mother tongue; I pushed the issue on them. I wanted them to come out with the strange notions that people usually have regarding South Indian languages. One or two boys said in a low voice “*idli, dosa*”, someone else said “*ai ayyai yo!*” They had heard these words so often in the Hindi cinema, that for them these were the only words Tamilians knew! One day I feigned real anger and told them about the rich literature of Tamil. I also pointed out the similarity in the vocabulary of Hindi and Tamil, and told them about its rich culture and fine arts

Popularizing any language is a two-way affair; you learn and respect mine, and I will learn and respect yours! It is as easy as that! Look at small children living in a multilingual locality; they learn 3-5 languages effortlessly, and can as

easily switch over from one to the other. Both my children learnt Hindi, Tamil and English plus a bit of Urdu and a lot of Marathi just by living on the border between Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Being offspring of bi/multilingual parents also helps a lot.

### **Projects/assignments to promote**

#### **bi/multilingualism**

Collect the following in the respective languages of the children

- Various expressions of welcome
- Names of relations (kinship) and finding similarities
- Alphabets of the mother tongue
- Words used in day-to-day living, such as names of vegetables, fruits and grocery.

### **Games to play in the class**

- (1) This is a game which we used to play as children, during the summer holidays. We would select a letter and all of us would write names such as the following (the letter here being ‘n’):

Narendra - name of a boy; Neeta - name of a girl; Nagpur - a city; Narangee - a fruit; Nose - a part of the body; Namak (salt) - an object; Navrang - title of a movie; Naachnaa (to dance) - a verb, etc.

Similarly, an alphabet may be chosen, and each child may be asked to write one word beginning with that letter in their own language. This helped a great deal in letter recognition and vocabulary building, and also classifying words in different categories.

- (2) Pick out some sounds that are generally mispronounced, or sound similar in 2-3 languages, but change the meaning of the word, such as ‘Z’ and ‘J’. Many Persian and Arabic sounds and words have found



place in Hindi along with a few English ones. One such sound is 'Z', which is used both in English and in Urdu. Hindi also has a 'J' sound, and usually educated people also pronounce 'Z' as 'J'. Next, collect some homophones and explain the difference in their meanings. Ask the children to make sentences using the following words:

*zara* 'a little', *jara* 'old age'; *zamana* 'a particular period', *jamana* 'to curdle'

(3) A very interesting project may be given to the children by asking them to collect words that have a similar sound, but have entirely different meanings, such as:

1. 'more' - In English it denotes the comparative degree of 'much'; in Hindi it means 'peacock' the bird; in Tamil it means 'buttermilk'.
2. 'hi' - In English as well as Marathi, it denotes a masculine pronoun in third person 'he'; but in Hindi, it is either an adverb meaning 'only', or used for giving emphasis.

Many such words can be found in various Indian languages, and interesting short stories or jokes can be composed around them. So, aren't there limitless possibilities in using multilingualism as a resource! It is not difficult if our hearts are in it.

By bringing languages together, you will be working towards the solidarity and unity of the nation, and will always find a place in the hearts of your students.

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# Cartoon Shows: A Tool to Facilitate Comprehension in Young Learners

Saumya Sharma

## Introduction

This article employs the story grammar model to explore the role of televised cartoon serials in facilitating comprehension in school children of elementary grade. In India, research in English language teaching has not only addressed the methods and approaches of teaching English in a multilingual society, its cultural and psycho-social aspects and the dilemmas of curriculum and texts, but also has focused on how to teach the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (henceforth LSRW) (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1997; Sheorey, 2006; Tickoo, 2003; Kudchedkar, 2002). However, scant attention has been paid to assessing whether or not the learner has comprehended the text. The fact that comprehension precedes production is well established, both in first and second language acquisition. Scholars such as Jean Piaget (2001) and Stephen Krashen (1981) have discussed the child's ability to comprehend (assimilate information and understand the various stimuli in the environment) much before his ability to articulate. Krashen (1981) uses the term 'silent period' to denote such a comprehension phase, in which 'comprehensible input' is necessary for learning. Comprehension is a complex process, which comprises cognition, affect and perception: through it learners negotiate meaning by creating schemas or mental frameworks, about the self and others (persons, objects and events). We can gauge the extent of a child's comprehension by analysing these schematic constructs, and this very premise has been employed in the story grammar model (Stein &

Glenn, 1979). This article tries to highlight how cartoon shows can be used to help develop the children's comprehension by forming schematic constructs. It is this comprehension, or cognitive processing, gauged through LSRW, that forms the focus of this paper, and not LSRW itself.

## Cartoons: A tool of instruction

The soaring income of working parents combined with long office hours, has contributed to a child's excessive viewing of the television, be it in the form of cartoons or video games. Adapting cartoons—a much-maligned medium—as a teaching tool can help both the teacher and the taught to view learning as fun. Cartoon channels such as *Pogo*, *Nickelodeon*, *Hungama TV*, *Cartoon Network*, etc., broadcast different serials in a bid to attract the young viewer. These serials include cartoons such as Walt Disney's anecdotes of *Tom and Jerry*; Japanese narratives of *Doraemon*, *Kiteresu*, *Hagemaru*, *Shin-Chan*; Indian mythological tales such as *Chota Bheem*, *Tenali Raman*, *Ramayana*; and the exploits of Power Rangers, Ben 10 and Pokemon. Most of these are easily accessible; thus their recreational value can be exploited in the classroom. They are thematically relevant, since they portray diverse cultures, and raise key moral and social issues. Also, their repeated and short duration of broadcast, and their multi-modality (verbal and visual elements creating a dramatic effect) permit them to be used as effective teaching tools.

## Theoretical framework

Adopting the story grammar approach (Stein & Glenn, 1979), cartoon shows can be utilized for teaching comprehension. This approach states that stories are thematic and plot-based, and contain the following features:

- a) A setting that introduces the characters, time and action.
- b) An initiating action, which is the action or the event that sets up the problem for the story.
- c) The internal response of the main character to the problem.
- d) The attempts made by the protagonists to solve the problem.
- e) The consequences of the actions of the characters, leading to the resolution of the problem.
- f) The reactions of the protagonists to the situation or event.

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Adults use the same story-structure in recalling (Mandler and Johnson, 1977) and summarizing stories, and this approach has even been employed to teach reading comprehension to learners via stories. To illustrate my premise, I have chosen three popular cartoon serials—*Tom and Jerry*, *Doraemon* and *Tenali Raman* (though others can be used as well)—to demonstrate how they contain the basic elements of story grammar, and can therefore be used to teach comprehension.

Story Grammar Elements	Tom and Jerry	Doraemon	Tenali Raman
Initiating Action	Mostly, Tom wishes to catch Jerry.	Mostly, Nobita creates a problem by disobeying his parents or teachers, or by getting into trouble with Gian, the school bully.	Tenali's enemies hatch a plot to revile him in court by creating a problem, or some commoner brings his grievance to the king.
Internal Response	Tom gloats over Jerry's panic.	Nobita is worried and seeks Doraemon's help.	Tenali is puzzled and mulls over the problem.
Attempts to solve the problem	Tom continues the mischief and Jerry retaliates either with objects-at-hand, or with the help of other animals such as Butch the dog.	Doraemon produces a gadget to solve the problem, but Nobita misuses it and the trouble escalates.	Tenali attempts to solve the problem through his wit/ clever tricks. Sometimes he takes the help of his wife.
Consequences	Jerry is saved from Tom's attack, who is either punished for his misdemeanor, or sustains an injury.	The problem is solved, Nobita is saved, and the gadget is restored to Doraemon.	The culprit is caught, order is restored, and Tenali is rewarded by the king.
Reactions of the Protagonist/s	Jerry is happy and relieved, whereas Tom is sad.	Nobita realizes his mistake and promises not to repeat it; Doraemon is happy.	Tenali's enemies are shamefaced; the king praises him much to everyone's joy.

*Comprehension is a two-fold process which includes surface comprehension of the text as well as a deeper comprehension of the events concerning the society at large. By viewing these cartoons, the learners are exposed to the mannerisms, social norms and cultures of various regions.*

### Analysis: Story grammar through cartoon shows

*Tom and Jerry*, produced by Walt Disney, shows the tales of a tyrannical cat called Tom

who is always pestering a mischievous mouse named Jerry. *Doraemon*, a Japanese cult icon that has become immensely popular of late, presents the anecdotes of an intelligent, humane robotic cat—*Doraemon*—who employs ‘electronic gadgets’ to help his naughty but innocent friend Nobita from problematical situations, or the school bully Gian. Its popularity can be evinced from the fact that it is telecast in most vernaculars, and was officially declared by the Japanese government as the anime ambassador of its culture in 2008. Unlike these

Stages	Questions on Tom and Jerry	Questions on Doraemon	Questions on Tenali Raman
Initiating action	Where are Tom and Jerry? What prompts Tom to trouble Jerry? What plans does he make to catch him?	What does Nobita's mother or teacher ask him to do? What does he actually do, and why?	What do Tenali's enemies plan, and why? What problem does the commoner face?
Internal Response	How does Tom feel after laying the trap for Jerry? How does Jerry feel?	What are the consequences of Nobita's disobedience? Why is he worried? Why does he go to Doraemon?	How does Tenali feel when he learns of the problem? How do his enemies feel?
Attempts to solve the problem	What does Jerry do to save himself? Whose help does he take and how? What does Tom do to continue chasing him?	What does Doraemon do to help Nobita? What does Nobita do with the gadget? Why does Nobita get into further trouble?	What puzzles Tenali? What does he do? Does he take anyone's help? If yes, who is it? Is the problem solved?
Consequences	Does Tom finally catch Jerry? How is Jerry saved? What happens to Tom in the end? Is he punished?	Why does Doraemon get angry with Nobita? What do Nobita and Doraemon do? Who helps them? How does Doraemon solve the problem? Who is punished and why?	Does Tenali solve the problem? How does he do so? What tricks does he use? What reward is Tenali given? What happens to the culprit?
Reactions of the Protagonist/s	Does Tom realize his mistake? How does Jerry feel?	Is Nobita saved? Does he realize his mistake? How do Nobita and Doraemon feel?	How does Tenali feel? Is the king pleased? Do his enemies realize their mistake?
Additional Questions on humour and social relevance	What is/are the funniest scene/scenes in the episode and why? What do we learn from it? What could have Tom done to save himself?	What is your favourite scene in the show and why? What do we learn from the story? What would have happened if the problem had remained unsolved? Who would have been hurt? Does this problem affect us too? If yes, what should we do to help ourselves?	What do you learn from the story? Do we face a similar problem? If yes, how should we solve it?

two shows, Tenali Raman tells the tales of the 'Birbal' of South India—a minister in the court of King Krishnadevaraya in Vijayanagar, who uses his intelligence to defeat his enemies. This legendary character has been adapted by various production houses in multiple regional languages, a notable case being *The Adventures of Tenali Raman* produced by Cartoon Network in 2001. Each episode of these shows has a different setting which introduces the place, the characters and the time frame.

The story grammar model allows comprehension to be tested on two grounds: a) actions and b) emotions of the characters, by forming schemas about the characters, events and settings. The teacher can show an episode and give handouts of a set of questions for each stage of the story

*Imagination, an integral component of comprehension, is employed in such a virtual world, allowing the young learner to become a part of the problem, and finding a solution by either impersonating one of the characters, or helping them. Alternatively, a recall test may include an oral or a written recollection of the salient events of the story and the teacher can maintain records of the learners to evaluate their progress.*

grammar. He/she may even add an additional set of questions on humour and values in order to contextualize the model and make it socially relevant to the young learners. These questions are deliberately generic, so that they can be modified by the teacher according to the episode shown, and the issues raised.

In the process of comprehending the text, the child thinks, feels, perceives and interprets speech within the context. The questions help to facilitate this comprehension further; they serve as prompts to decode the dialogue and visuals (*Doraemon* and *Tenali Raman*), or only visuals (Tom and Jerry), by forming schemas

about the characters, their actions and feelings, the sequencing of events, and the setting.

Comprehension is a two-fold process which includes surface comprehension of the text as well as a deeper comprehension of the events concerning the society at large. By viewing these cartoons, the learners are exposed to the mannerisms, social norms and cultures of various regions. According to Hall (2011), the L2 classroom becomes a “place where the ‘local’ and ‘global’ come together” (p. 27). He also quotes Johnston suggesting that language teaching is a value-laden activity. So these cartoons can serve to teach social and moral values and also raise awareness about their relevance. The questions help the learners to understand the events in the show, and to relate them to their everyday experience. For example, one of the episodes of *Doraemon* shows the protagonists building a subway for Nobita's father so that he does not have to walk in crowded places to reach that subway. This episode can be used to highlight the relevance of subways in modern India. In *Tenali Raman*, the protagonist agrees to serve the cruel Raj Purohit in order to teach him a lesson on how to treat servants humanely. The teacher can, by underscoring the importance of treating the domestic help in a humane manner, educate the children to be socially responsible citizens.

The responses of the learners can be scored to record the progression of their comprehension. After viewing a series of cartoons, teachers may give the children a home and a classroom assignment in the form of an online game and a recall test, respectively. A worksheet consisting of the following questions about the online game may also be given as follows:

- 1) On which website did you find the game?
- 2) What were the names of the characters in the game?
- 3) What problem/s do they face?

- 4) What did they do to solve the problem/s?
- 5) Did you play one of the characters?
- 6) How did you help the characters to solve the problem?

Imagination, an integral component of comprehension, is employed in such a virtual world, allowing the young learner to become a part of the problem, and finding a solution by either impersonating one of the characters, or helping them. Alternatively, a recall test may include an oral or a written recollection of the salient events of the story and the teacher can maintain records of the learners to evaluate their progress.

## Conclusion

Comprehension can be enhanced by using elements of story grammar to explain and express the plot and themes of cartoons shows. Cognitive understanding includes a complex set of thinking, feeling, perceiving and listening skills that can lead to successful teaching and assessment of comprehension. Furthermore, exercises on writing, grammar and vocabulary can be designed based on the same shows, making them an all-embracing yet enjoyable medium for teaching English in India.

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# Teaching English in Class I

*Nivedita Vijay Bedadur*

## Introduction

I was posted to the remote area of Diu, and was miles away from urban civilization and its benefits. When I was asked to teach Class I, I felt nonplussed. I was tired of everybody telling me, “teaching kids in this school is a fruitless job; if they manage to learn their a,b,c etc., it will be a wonder”. I began to wonder how I could teach children to read. As a child, I had been taught in a traditional manner, beginning with a year long practice of first the capital letters, then the small letters, followed by two and then three letter words, and finally short sentences. I had learnt many words by heart, and had been my teacher’s pet. But I still remember the pain in my hands and the boredom in my heart with hatred.

## Teacher training

In my B.Ed. classes, I had been taught the importance of phonic drills which went on something like “bill, pill, mill, dill”. Then, we also had incremental drills such as “at, bat, it, bit”. We had been taught to create rhyming word lists such as “sat, cat”, or alliterative lists such as “sing a song”. It was like a parrot being taught how to speak. I wondered how all of that would lead to speaking or reading English in a meaningful way.

I wondered if the aim of learning and teaching was to teach how to write and read the alphabet, and a few words and sentences. Wasn’t the soul of learning lost in this meaningless repetition? I was in search of those tasks which

would engage and give children a joy of learning and discovery. I also wanted the children’s experience of learning to be meaningful and memorable.

## The fateful day

At last the fateful day arrived, and I stood in front of an eager batch of children bursting with energy. It was very difficult to keep them in place, to stop them from fidgeting, and to listen

*I told them many stories, and the stories would be woven around their lives, their mother and their father and fishing nets and fish. These stories were mostly bilingual, with Hindi syntax and English vocabulary. They also contained phrases in dialogues that were in English, for example “Come here”, said the fisherman’s wife. In the evenings, most of us would meet at the seashore, and go for a walk, where the sea, the fish and the fisherman’s wife would come alive. The children also told me stories of sighting of dolphins, the return of their fathers from long fishing trips, a marriage in the community, etc. I often retold these stories to them in English.*

to me for a while. So I decided to listen to them. I just sat down among them and listened. Soon, we formed a circle and sang some songs. Most of the songs were in Hindi, which was children’s school language, and two songs were in English. The children tried to follow the songs, but most of them lost interest.



Then we sat down, and I told them that I had some colours—real water colours—for them. This triggered their interest immediately. We talked about what they would like to draw, what they had seen outside, what they had seen inside the classroom, etc. Most of this conversation took place in Hindi, but I surreptitiously sneaked in English words which they knew and understood, and some of which they did not. They seemed to understand the meaning from the context. I asked them what they would like to draw; some wanted to draw their house, others wanted to draw fruits, and it went on like this. We decided that we would give two names to each drawing, one that they would choose, and one that I would choose. And I would tell them the name I had chosen.

This interested them, and so I made groups and made them sit around a box of paints, water and paper. I went around, and sat with each group while they drew and painted. We chatted about colours. The words “red, blue and green” were discussed. Soon I was telling them in English to bring water from the tap, close the door, try green here, mix red and blue. They did not seem to notice the difference between the two languages. They were so engrossed in the task that they responded to me automatically; some children even started using English names for the colours.

Later, when their painting sheets were ready, I wrote in English the names of the things they had drawn on the sheets. Each child brought her picture to me; we chatted about the picture, wrote the names both in Hindi and English, and clipped the pictures to a clip board. Everybody looked at each other’s pictures, commented upon them and talked about them. We decided that we would talk about the pictures, and say which ones we liked. So children talked about the pictures, and when they asked me to comment, I said things like, “This should have been a little greener, red looks better”.

I then wrote down on the board under each picture the child’s name, what they had drawn. They started telling me the names of the things—some in Hindi and some in English. It happened quite spontaneously, and I too wrote them down spontaneously. Some children had drawn biscuits that they had taken during breakfast, others had drawn their houses, and some had drawn bananas and balloons that we had brought just the other day for our class picnic.

Every day we would do something similar. Sometimes, we would fill our water bottles with clean water from the tap, and then name each bottle, so there was a big bottle, a small bottle, etc. These names remained on the bottles for a short while, but they were etched on the minds

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of the students with permanent markers! And we would sit down and talk about them. Soon most of our talk was in English!

I told them many stories, and the stories would be woven around their lives, their mother and their father and fishing nets and fish. These stories were mostly bilingual, with Hindi syntax and English vocabulary. They also contained phrases in dialogues that were in English, for example “Come here”, said the fisherman’s wife. In the evenings, most of us would meet at the seashore, and go for a walk, where the sea, the fish and the fisherman’s wife would come alive. The children also told me stories of sighting

of dolphins, the return of their fathers from long fishing trips, a marriage in the community, etc. I often retold these stories to them in English.

Now, I started bringing big books to school, as our walls were chock-a-block with the children's work. We had named a lot of things in English, and put up their pictures on the walls. The pictures, with their name labels, hung like kites on the criss-cross wires, singing in the wind that blew from the sea. We often pointed to them and talked about how they looked, and removed some to replace them with better versions. Of course, the names of the things were written by me, but the children had started writing their own names, and very proudly too. We often sat under the banyan tree in the yard, reading the big book about the little mermaid or the fisherman's wife, with children drawing pictures in the sand.

Of course, I had to teach the alphabet, and it was fun to discover them in the books that we had read. More often than not, the children could read an entire word once they had located the alphabet in the text. We had read the books so many times that it evoked instant recognition.

All this happened when we started bringing to the class bottle labels, pamphlets, shampoo sachets, and empty packets of *kurkure*. We looked at them and read the names on the labels, and sometimes the instructions too on them. We stuck them in a large album that I had created out of old chart papers and covers, and the children wrote under them. The spellings were often funny; they were invented spellings and the letters were all awry, but they were all written by the children. I would sit down and ask them what they were writing. Each one was so special.

## Conclusion

Thus, we started on our journey of literacy—a memorable journey filled with fun and lots of hard work, but the children were with me. Our bonds cemented with the glue of love.

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# Democratizing the Classroom: Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed as a Critical Pedagogical Tool

Chitra Seshadhri

## Introduction

This paper is thoroughly experimental in designing various activities to suit the students who hail from the underprivileged sections of the society as well as those students who internalize a sense of oppression whenever it comes to learning English. Democratization of the classroom leads to the participation of all the students to not only communicate in English, but also to start speaking a few words. Students who are first generation learners internalize a fear when a teacher talks continuously in English. They feel alienated, and the words uttered become mere incomprehensible sounds to them. In this scenario, the English teacher's role is to first take his/her class into confidence. *The Theatre of the Oppressed* by Augusto Boal comes as a critical tool in breaking the ice in such classrooms.

English often afflicts the audience/students. And yet, they have to communicate in English, and this develops an ambivalence among them. In this scenario, the technique of the Brazilian theatre director-cum-social activist Augusto Boal is likely to have a therapeutic effect on the audience. Boal was raised in Rio de Janeiro, and was formally trained in Chemical Engineering. He attended Columbia University in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although his interest in theatre began at a very young age, it was after he finished his degree at Columbia University that he was asked to return to Brazil to work in the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo. His work at the Arena Theatre led him to experiment with new forms of theatre that would have an

extraordinary impact on traditional theatre practice. The present argument, and the activities proposed thereafter are structured on the concept of the spect-actor developed by Boal.

## The spect-actor

Prior to Boal's experimentation, audiences were invited to discuss a play at the end of performance. In so doing, according to Boal, they remained mere viewers and 'reactors' to the action before them. In the 1960s, Boal

*Students who are first generation learners internalize a fear when a teacher talks continuously in English. They feel alienated, and the words uttered become mere incomprehensible sounds to them. In this scenario, the English teacher's role is to first take his/her class into confidence.*

developed a process whereby audience members could interrupt a performance, and suggest a different action for the character who was experiencing oppression; the actor playing that character would then continue with his performance incorporating the suggestions of the audience. But in a legendary development, a woman in the audience once was so outraged when an actor could not understand her suggestion that she came onto the stage and showed what she meant. For Boal, this was the birth of the spect-actor (not spectator), and his theatre was transformed. He began to invite audience members with suggestions for change onto the stage to demonstrate their ideas. In so

doing, he discovered that through this participation the audience members became empowered not only to imagine the change, but to actually practise that change.

In overcoming inhibition, performative pedagogy is always expected to create greater impact than narrative pedagogy. Therefore, most of the activities developed here are based on the techniques of Boal and the main focus will be on social issues at the local, regional and national level. Teachers must choose issues that the students are familiar with, can react to and are able to participate in.

Some of the steps involved in Boal's technique are: A script should be prepared and enacted by a group of students. There should be a joker/facilitator to mediate between the actors and the audience. The teacher himself/herself can play this role. The audience may be allowed to interrupt at any point to perform any role, or their suggestions may simply be taken into account and the original conclusion of the script be changed. Interchange of roles between the student performers and student spectators is also allowed.

### Activity 1

The following activity is based on a scene that everyone can relate to.

Theme: In a bus during peak hour

Make 10 students stand in two rows of five each, not facing each other, with one student performing the role of the conductor. Let them slightly sway to and fro to mimic the movement in a bus. Let one row represent men, and the other women, both of varying age groups. The driver brakes suddenly; while all the women hold on to the rails and maintain their balance, three out of ten men fall on their women counterparts, leading to a heated exchange.

College girl student : Are you not ashamed to fall on me like this?

Man : As though I don't have any other work. It is because of the sudden brakes.

College girl student : All the passengers were subjected to the sudden brakes. Did they all come and fall on this side?

Man : Oh! You are such a beauty queen; that is why I fell on you. Ugh

Second Man : Sir, don't create a problem.

College girl student : Don't talk too much. You did it wantonly that is what I mean.

Second Woman : These men degrade women on purpose.

Man : All these college girls carrying bags and travelling by buses, wanting to become collectors and doctors. We know how you roam around.

College girl student : Mister! Don't talk too much. We are not of such character. What you did was wrong, just accept that. Don't slander college-going students. Better shut your mouth... Or else...

Second Man : Please, both of you keep quiet. It's getting late for work.

Second Woman : Do these men not have sisters? They insult women far too much.

Man (teasingly) : What will you do madam? Let me see. Let me see. (Coming closer)

Conductor (intervenes) : Hey you, I will stop the bus and you will have to get off.

Man : Oh! You are the security guard for women, is it? You think you can get away with whatever you want to do?

Conductor : Driver, take the bus to the police station.

College girl student : Yes, that is the right place for this man

The Man : What did you say ? (Shouts angrily)

The facilitator/joker may allow the activity to be interrupted at this point, and ask the audience for their opinion. He/she may:

- I) Ask for different ways of handling the situation (at least 5).
- II) Ask for solutions to the problem from different students (at least 5).

The students may be allowed to recommend suggestions/solutions in their native tongue. The suggestions should be translated into English by another student, and then repeated by the first one. Based on the suggestions, a new script with a different set of exchanges may be prepared and performed by another group of students. During the course of the performance, the facilitator may ask the students to switch roles. Hence interchange of role even within a group is possible.

## Activity 2

### Newspaper theatre

In this technique, Boal suggests that a script be written around any interesting news item. The following activity is based on the news item *Green Guardians*, which appeared on the first page of The Hindu Metro Plus dated 26 April 2011.

Student 1 : Today I am going to tell you all the story of how a grief-stricken man turned into a green-guardian.

Student 2 : What green guardian? I am not able to understand (looking at her friends). Can one of you tell me the meaning of green guardian?

Allow at least five student spectators to interact between themselves. They may try and guess what the green guardian is.

Student 1 : Okay! That's fine. I will tell you the meaning of green guardian; it means a person who protects trees and plants to make our earth a greener place.

Student 3 : But you said that a grief-stricken man turned into a green guardian. What is that?

Student 4 : Let me continue. Yes, that is a sad story. It is about a farmer called Mullaivanam,

from Sriperumbudur. In 2006, he lost his wife Dhanalakshmi to cancer.

Student 5 : Oh! That's really sad. What happened to him after that?

Student 6 : He must have become heart-broken and sad. It is difficult to overcome such grief.

Student 3 : But she said that he turned into a green guardian. Wait wait let us hear the entire story.

Student 4 : Mullaivanam emerged from his despair through fresh commitment to a social mission.

Student 7: Oh! That's really great. I think it must be through the trees and plants that he must have found solace. Am I right?

Student 8 : Exactly. I am going to ask you all a question.

Actors/spectators : Yes ...

Student 8 : Blood saves lives; hence there are blood banks similarly...

Student intervention : Trees save lives, hence there are tree banks.

Student 1 : Yes, good. Now can anyone continue?

The facilitator may suggest someone, or leave it to the students to volunteer.

Student 9 : That's fantastic! Blood banks and tree banks. You know Mullaivanam founded the Tree Bank of India in 2008.

Student 10 : Yes, this has given a massive boost to social tree planting. Can you guess what its activities are?

(At least five reactions from the student/spectators are required.)

Student 3 : Almost all of you have guessed it right. The Tree Bank gives free saplings to anyone who cares to ask.

Student 4 : Yes, tree lovers in a district are elevated to leadership roles.

Student 7 : How is that possible? Please explain.



Student 4 : The tree lovers run the Green Ribbon club. The volunteers who work under them are assigned three different roles and they are awarded three different coloured stars.

Student 8 : Wait wait. Let me tell them. I did not get a chance to speak so far.

Student 4 : Yes, go ahead.

Student 8 : The three differently coloured stars are: green for planters, yellow for nurturers (of the plants and trees), and white for the distributors of saplings.

Student 9 : Hats off to this man. His positive attitude towards life and his social mission are truly inspiring. What do you say?

Allow as many reactions as possible, even if they are negative. Another script could be prepared based on these reactions.

Student 10 : The story is not over. Please sit down. The Tree Bank also trains teams in the essentials of tree service. They collect seedlings, prepare makeshift bags, grow plants in them, transfer them to the ground and protect them with tree guards.

Student 9 : According to Mullaivanam, his team goes all across India to train people. Those who require their services just need to pay for the tickets to their place. The services are free.

Student 8 : What are the reasons for environmental degradation?

Allow at least five reactions.

Student 6 : We have a very important duty, of saving our planet Earth. Social tree-planting is the best way for achieving this.

All together : The Earth would be a better place to live in.

### Activity 3

#### Forum theatre

This activity is based on the Forum Theatre technique of Boal, which begins with the

enactment of a scene (or anti-model) in which a protagonist tries, unsuccessfully, to overcome a form of oppression relevant to the audience. The joker then invites the spect-actors to replace the protagonist at any point in the performance, where they can imagine an alternative action that could lead to a solution. The scenes are replayed numerous times with different interventions. This results in a dialogue about the oppression, an examination of the alternatives, and a 'rehearsal' for real-life situations. This activity caters to higher-level learners.

Theme: The anti-corruption campaign of Anna Hazare and the Lok Pal Bill.

Student 1 : Oh! The Indian society is doomed. Even God cannot save it. Look at the scandals and the corruption that one reads about in the newspapers every day. It's sickening.

Student 2 : Why are you so disheartened? Don't be so pessimistic. This is how it is in *Kaliyug*.

Student 3 : What? You are talking like an old person.

Student 4 : What he/she says is true. According to the Puranas, it is believed that the dark power *Kali* occupies only the material space on this earth.

Student 3 : What do you mean by material space?

Student 4 : Material things such as land, money, gold, gambling, alcoholism, etc., which ultimately leads to the deterioration of the society.

Student 3 : I can't understand this logic.

Student 4 : The *Kali Purush* is an embodiment of all these dark spaces, and he tempts the people of this world to commit sins in order to attain these things.

Student 2 : That is why people run after real estate, gold, platinum, crores of rupees etc.

Student 1 : It is crass materialism that leads to such attitudes. The attitude of people should



change. They are ready to flout ethics and morals to become millionaires.

Student 3 : So you mean to say that it's not just politicians who are greedy and corrupt but even the common man is like that.

Student 4 : Then in that case you are not in favour of the Lok Pal bill that investigates and convicts corrupt politicians.

Student 5 : Maybe he means that a mere Lok Pal Bill cannot cleanse this society of its sham. A change should occur in the individual consciousness.

Student 6 : Okay then let me throw this discussion to the audience.

(Get as many views as possible and encourage the students to express them freely, and based on their views, change the set of actors.)

Similarly, other activities may be evolved by the teacher to involve the students. This would be the first step towards making them communicate in the classroom, which should not be monopolized by the better students. Boal's Theatre allows participation but not marginalisation, thus democratizing the classroom.



Augusto Boal conducting a workshop.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Augusto\\_Boal\\_nyc5.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Augusto_Boal_nyc5.jpg))

A teacher may even make his/her students sit around the performers rather than in the conventional mode. This creates a friendly atmosphere.

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# Overcoming Bias in ELT Textbooks: A Study in the Indian Context

*Rudrashis Datta*

## Introduction

Textbooks form the primary resource of English language teaching in classrooms in most second language scenarios of the world. Their primacy as the basic source material lies as much in their versatility of production, as in their ease of use in actual classroom situations. Furthermore, textbooks serve as models of language materials, graded and refined, and made to suit the level of learners in accordance with the immediate and long-term requirements of the policy makers, both at macro- and micro-level contexts. Though some commentators have degraded the importance of textbooks in ELT, and described them as “a shackle for the innovative teacher”, (Saraswathi, 2004, p. 120), the primacy of textbooks in English classrooms has not been effectively challenged to this day.

## Content of texts

It is commonly accepted that textbooks are collated from English language and literature resources, either directly, or in an abridged or summarized form, in accordance with the level of attainment of the learners. In the Indian context, ‘readers’ or graded textbooks which serve as the repository of basic language and literature structures, have formed the core of English language curriculum across the state and national boards administering secondary and senior secondary examinations. Since all textbooks in ELT are supposed to contain lexical units which are “central in language use and language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 227), it is significant that content be so chosen

that contextual and lexical use can be united through carefully selected passages or extracts.

The content of textbooks in English courses can be categorized under the following basic types:

1. Prose passages, directly lifted from original English works, such as extracts
2. Prose passages abridged from original English works
3. Short stories
4. Extracts from newspapers, generally journalistic reports
5. Poems by English or Indian poets, usually limited to sonnets or lyrics not more than 30 lines
6. Recreations of well known English plays in prose
7. Extracts from full length plays, usually in the form of an important or climactic scene

## ‘Bias’ and where it creeps in

‘Bias’ is a widely defined term in the contexts of sociology and social psychology. Ordinarily, ‘bias’ can be defined as the tendency to portray and interpret individuals, their actions, or socio-cultural practices according to the parameters defined by the observer, usually in rigid, non-flexible terms (Baron & Byrne, 2002, p. 91). This rigidity often results in the portrayal of a different culture or practice as ‘wrong’ merely because it differs from the point of view of the observer. In the context of the present study,

the bias may not be as explicit as has been defined. In some instances, its presence is so subtle that for an ordinary reader, it would be almost non-existent. It is this aspect that makes dealing with bias in ELT textbooks difficult to detect and deal with.

*Mcdonough & Shaw (2003, p. 65) clearly highlight the examination of cultural bias as one of the nine important evaluative parameters of a coursebook. Once a bias is detected, a specific workplan dedicated to neutralizing the biased material has to be chalked out by the teacher.*

Teachers using ELT texts in Indian schools often encounter bias, usually in the form of:

1. Neglect and invisibility: This can be commonly detected in textbooks where women and religious or cultural minorities have little presence in the selected prose or poetry pieces.
2. Stereotyping: This involves assigning traditional and rigid roles to certain sections of the society or individuals, thereby making them unable to function as members in different roles in the society.
3. Selectivity: Since individual literary works may not have the scope to infuse deliberate socio-cultural universality in their plot unless the author deems it necessary, it often makes random selections of prose or poetry pieces for ELT textbooks a hazardous exercise.
4. Unreality: In many cases, our textbooks produce extracts from works which are written from specific viewpoints in contexts that are different from the target student group. Students who are taught such texts may tend to take whatever they read as true or real, and invalidate their own real life experience as something untrue.
5. Isolation: Women and socio-religious minorities are often neglected in mainstream literary texts. Extracts from such texts in

ELT textbooks may present them to be fringe groups with little or no social importance.

### **Basic Guidelines in ELT Material Preparation to Minimize Bias**

It has been highlighted earlier, that no editor of a textbook would normally include materials that are overtly violent or in any way offensive to the learners. However, in spite of the best editorial competencies, materials containing biases often creep into a text. A study of the examples of biases encountered by our teachers in English language texts reveals that the norms of content-selection and content-illustration are often flouted during the editorial process. The basic norms which may minimize biases in texts are:

1. Photographs and illustrations, if used, shall portray a wide range of socio-religious backgrounds, rather than a limited number.
2. Characters having names common to religious or social minorities should be sensitively portrayed, so as not to give an impression that members of such groups are prone to certain types of behaviour.
3. Plots of stories should avoid gender type-casting. For example, a prose piece entitled 'A Happy Family', showing that the father goes out to work and the sister helps her mother in the kitchen, while the brother plays with his friends outside the house, can easily generate a notion among learners that male members of a family are generally earning members, and female members are more suited to household chores.
4. Literature pieces sourced from foreign writers should be filtered for nuances that may appear foreign to the target students.
5. All vocations and professions in the texts should be depicted in such a way so as to show equal respect and importance for them.

6. Nationalities, if necessary, should be depicted in a manner that promotes mutual respect, rather than animosity.
7. All textual materials should be subject to peer review for detection and elimination of instances of bias. This may significantly diminish instances which would otherwise escape the eyes of a single editor.

Clearly, these checks and balances can go a long way in decreasing instances of bias in our English textbooks for children. However, in spite of a number of such precautions, our teachers often encounter instances of bias in textual materials. Significantly enough, Tickoo (2003, p. 265), stresses on the need for assessing a textual material on the basis of its ideology, since, admittedly, most biases that creep into a text are a manifestation of a flawed ideology.

### Dealing with bias in actual classroom situation

English language teachers wanting to use a textbook in a particular class are likely to go through the textual matter in some depth. Examples of bias, if any, are likely to be detected at this stage of evaluating a language material – well before the text is used in the classroom. McDonough & Shaw (2003, p. 65) clearly highlight the examination of cultural bias as one of the nine important evaluative parameters of a coursebook. Once a bias is detected, a specific workplan dedicated to neutralizing the biased material has to be chalked out by the teacher. In such an instance, a teacher ought to keep the golden rule of teaching English texts in mind, which is, “English teaching materials are not meant to be taught in the exact way they have been produced” (Ramadevi, 2002, p. 207). Such a plan may take the following sequential steps:

Step 1. Look out for bias.

Step 2. If bias detected, note the nature of the bias, whether linguistic, cultural, religious, social, gender or racial.

Step 3. Devise alternative paradigms, usually through extraneous examples, to neutralize the bias in the classroom.

Step 4. Involve the students in discussions on why the matter is biased, and why it is not supported by facts from real life.

### Illustration

A textual material in the form of a journalistic report describes how local villagers enter a protected forest without permission, and collect logs of wood in darkness. In the absence of logs and twigs post-autumn, they cut branches from trees. Trees have been destroyed for years through such a practice.

*In fact most children, in actual practice, go beyond the meanings of words and phrases and generate their own world view on the basis of a text. In fact, according to Davison & Dawson (2003, p. 276), ‘knowing the specification’ is an essential parameter of a successful detection and neutralization of a text-based bias in English language classrooms, ‘specification’ referring to the layers of meaning that a text can generate in the course of an in-depth study.*

Areas where bias is generated in the young readers:

1. Villagers are insensitive when it comes to following the laws of the land and concern for environment.
2. In the absence of reasons for cutting the logs of wood, a learner may not know that

poverty and lack of alternative sources of fuel are forcing the villagers to act in the way they are doing.

How is the bias neutralized in the classroom?

1. The teacher highlights the reasons for the actions of the villagers.
2. The teacher highlights other examples to show how people in the villages adopt environmentally sensitive practices in their homes and surroundings.

As is seen in the illustration above, it is imperative that a teacher equips himself/herself with the sub-texts of a given textual material, since texts do not remain at the level of a first-level meaning generation in most children. In fact most children, in actual practice, go beyond the meanings of words and phrases and generate their own world view on the basis of a text. In fact, according to Davison and Dawson (2003, p. 276), 'knowing the specification' is an essential parameter of a successful detection and neutralization of a text-based bias in English language classrooms, 'specification' referring to the layers of meaning that a text can generate in the course of an in-depth study.

## Conclusion

It is unanimously agreed among all the stakeholders of the English language instruction that bias has to be eliminated in text materials because of its potentially harmful impact on adolescent minds. In fact, since English is veritably a link language for the entire globe, and writers use the language in varied contexts, course materials taken from original English works are prone to varied levels of misinterpretations and bias. Only a careful editor and an alert and informed teacher can help learners develop a realistic, balanced and

unbiased world view, which can withstand the twin rigours of literary scrutiny and general rationalism.

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# A Short Paper Proposing that we Need to Write Shorter Papers

*Stephen Krashen*

“When we ask the time, we don’t want to know how watches are constructed.”

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799)

## **Introduction**

Our current journals in language education are full of long papers. A typical journal might have, at most, five major papers. Sometimes we have to write long papers, but most of the time, it is unnecessary: The papers often contain long introductions more suitable for doctoral dissertations or review ‘state of the art’ papers apparently designed to provide evidence that the author is well-read. They also have long conclusions, with a repetition of the findings and the author’s detailed and lengthy speculations about what the results might mean for theory and application.

Readers of professional journals do not need this. Introductions should only give enough information to alert the reader as to what the article is about, and provide a few citations in case the reader needs more information. If the articles cited in the introduction are readily available, readers are free to consult them, and a brief indication of implications is generally more than enough for experienced readers. Also, if the results section is clear, no repetition of the findings is necessary in the conclusion.

Watson and Crick’s (1953) Nobel Prize winning paper on the double helix was only one page. Their conclusion: “It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material” (p. 737).

Long papers drain intellectual energy from both readers and writers, and waste their time.

Long papers take longer to write, and much of

the energy in writing them is dedicated to sections that don’t engage the writer: Writing is a powerful tool to solve problems, and can result in substantial cognitive development (it can make you smarter), but to do this, the writing must be directed at a difficult problem (Langer & Applebee, 1987).

Long papers also take longer to read. Even readers who try to skim long papers have to devote time and energy to find the essential parts, and run the danger of missing the details.

## **A Disservice to the Profession and to the Scholar**

Too-long papers hurt the spread of knowledge in two ways: They waste our time in both reading and writing, and they promote sloppy reading. Many readers are content just to read the abstract and perhaps the summary of technical papers, with just a glance at a table. This means that significant details on methodology, crucial points and analyses buried in the paper, are missed, and often errors are perpetuated.

Too-long papers also take up space. A journal with five long papers could easily include 20 short papers. This space limitation hurts the dissemination of knowledge, because not only is the information less genuine, but it is much harder for junior scholars to publish and to get tenure and promotion, especially when universities require publication in certain journals. This problem will be alleviated as more journals become available electronically.

## Conclusion

Again, sometimes papers have to be long. But often they don't, and the problem usually lies with the long introductions and conclusions that go far beyond the needs of the paper.

Language education has clearly taken its tradition from the humanities, which favors dissertation-style prose, rather than the sciences, where papers are usually much shorter.

It is probably no coincidence that citation rates in science are much higher: Hamilton (1991) reported that about 91% of papers published in atomic, molecular and chemical physics, and 86% in virology, had been cited at least once. In language and linguistics, only 20% had been cited and in American literature, less than 1%.

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# Interview

## Face to Face with K.N. Anandan

**P.K. Jayaraj**

*Dr. Anandan is a Chomskyan linguist turned ELT practitioner. He conceived Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP) which brought about a shift from the skill based and fragmentary teaching of structures and vocabulary to a more holistic approach, giving primacy to language acquisition. His book **Chomskyan Revolution in Linguistics** won him the Kerala Sahitya Academy Endowment Award in 2006. His second book **Tuition to Intuition** introduces his vision of second language pedagogy.*

**P. K. Jayaraj (PKJ):** You began your career as a school teacher in a remote, rural village of Kerala, and later became the headmaster in the same school. Could you tell us briefly about your background, your areas of academic interest, and what led you to become an educational activist?

**K. N. Anandan (KNA):** I began my career in 1969, as a headmaster. When I started teaching and observing classes, I became disillusioned with the teaching-learning process. I decided to exercise my freedom to do something different. I started devising new classroom processes for teaching science and languages. I improvised cost-effective lab equipment and apparatus, and encouraged students to learn science by doing. When I look back I feel that I always had a lens of my own.

**PKJ:** What led you to get interested in language pedagogy?

**KNA:** In those years, my interest in language pedagogy was partially due to my ego as a person who could use English to teach English. In spite of the enormous time I spent on teaching structural patterns with the help of teaching aids, I realized that children were not doing well. My initial enthusiasm in working as a headmaster started waning because of the boring beurocracy. I got myself enrolled in the Post-Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of English (PGCTE) at CIEFL (now EFLU), and later for the Post-Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English (PGDTE) and M.Litt. My life on the campus changed my outlook towards teaching

and learning of English. I was lucky to get Prof Jayaseelan, a renowned Chomskyan linguist as my research guide for M.Litt. and Ph.D. Having studied Chomsky, I became more and more sceptical about the entire field of ELT, which I thought was erected on 'dubious' claims. I was also wondering why the ELT scholars were grossly ignoring Chomsky.

I left the campus. "What next?", this question intrigued me. Would I be satisfied with being a mere theoretical linguist? Could Chomsky help the rural and poor children of Kerala learn English better? Deriving insights from Chomsky, I started developing and trying out several pedagogic models for teaching English. The first model, ACE (Acquiring Competence in English), was tried out in schools. In ACE, the major input for the learners was interaction between two teachers based on selected pictures. Eventually, children also started participating in the interaction. As an innovative pedagogic model, ACE received a lot of media coverage.

**PKJ:** The language pedagogy you advocate has been widely discussed within and outside Kerala. What inspired you to become a strong promoter of this pedagogy?

**KNA:** I was convinced that Chomsky could be translated into classroom processes. He was the only linguist who claimed that man had an innate language system. When I was appointed consultant of the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) Kerala, I got a platform to put my practical model of Chomsky before a wider audience. It was then that I conceived the Second Language Acquisition Programme

(SLAP), which materialized a shift from the skill-based and fragmentary teaching of structures and vocabulary, to a more holistic approach, giving primacy to language acquisition. SLAP faced a lot of resistance. In the place of textbooks, I had conceived an evolving text book (ETB), in which the individual learner was the creator of the textbook. There was a major hurdle before me. Who could help me to take my vision to the field? Through a series of workshops, a team emerged that was convinced about the rationale for rejecting ELT practices. SLAP was finally in the field!

**PKJ:** I think it was perhaps during the days of DPEP that there was a shift in the language pedagogy, from teaching English with letters and sounds, to teaching with a language discourse. In other words, there was an emphasis on a holistic approach to language teaching. Could you explain, with a few details, the salient features of the discourse pedagogy?

**KNA:** There was a shift in language pedagogy in the late 1990s. But the ELT circles in India said, “It is not possible in the second language context”. My experiences led me to sharpening the classroom processes and eventually Discourse Oriented Pedagogy took shape. I continued my field research on language pedagogy from 2000 to 2005. I developed several pedagogic models, such as RACE (Rapid Acquisition of Competence in English), REAP (Rapid English Acquisition Programme), and FACE (Facilitating Acquisition of Competence in English). Two powerful pedagogic tools were used in all these programmes—the first was the use of narratives as a major input, and the second was code-switching for beginners. These programmes were tried out in hundreds of schools across the state, and in all of them they were able to bring about tangible changes in the performance of the learners.

Discourse Oriented Pedagogy is built on the claim that a language cannot be acquired by simply learning the elements of the language,

and practising language skills. Since language exists only as meaningful discourses, both the input and output should be in the form of discourses. Textbooks do not have slots for practising language elements and vocabulary. Instead, they contain discourse tasks which take care of both language elements and skills.

**PKJ:** How did you begin implementing this pedagogy? Could you tell us the circumstances in which you began with it? What sort of challenges did you face? What was the reaction of the administrators, and the teaching community in particular?

**KAN:** In light of my experience in working on discourse pedagogy in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, I was invited to join the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Kerala, in 2006. It was also during this period that I was entrusted with the chairmanship of the English Focus Group of KCF (Kerala Curriculum Framework - 2007). As a forerunner of the curriculum and textbook revision in Kerala based on KCF, a programme called ACE (Acquisition of Competence in English) was conceived for SSA, and launched in 1300 schools in Kerala. The tryout experience of ACE gave a lot of vigour and momentum to the state team involved in the revision of English textbooks.

**PKJ:** Despite stiff resistance from all quarters, how did you manage to play a key role in the process of curriculum development and textbook preparation in Kerala?

**KNA:** The Kerala textbook writing team critically examined NCF 2005 and NCERT textbooks. Instead of the theme based approach followed in NCERT books, they decided to follow an issue-based approach. All the textbooks from classes 1 to 10 were organized around major social issues, which had local as well as global implications. At the secondary level, authentic texts were used, which gave a lot of importance to literature. Eminent linguists such as Prof Jayaseelan endorsed the pedagogy and worked with the team.

There was a lot of resistance, but it was not against English alone. Several quarters launched massive attacks against issue-based curriculum, and the critical approach it envisaged. The Government of Kerala democratically tackled the debate and the polemics that were generated in the state. However, since there was a highly motivated and convinced group of people working with me, I could face the criticism with ease. Besides, those who criticised were not ready for any intellectual debate; nor did they propose any alternatives.

**PKJ:** How far have your ideas been incorporated in the current English textbooks of the state level schools in Kerala? Are you happy with them?

**KNA:** I am happy with the textbooks, though there are certain areas that need to be revisited. In any case, no textbook should run for more than five years. Besides, I do not fully endorse top-driven models; models must be evolved at the bottom level with the ownership of the teachers, the people, and the community in general.

**PKJ:** In spite of an increasing acceptance of some of your ideas in the Kerala academia, there is a lot criticism of the books that have been produced under your guidance. You have been accused of idealism, and not understanding the reality of Kerala. How do you respond to these criticisms?

**KNA:** I have been criticized for being a dreamer and an idealist. In a democracy, anyone who initiates a change will be criticized. As I am a student of critical pedagogy, I think that even my models should be critically examined. At the same time, no one can ignore the changes that have been taking place in the field.

**PKJ:** Your popularity has led the Andhra Pradesh State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) to seek your guidance in preparing their English textbooks. Could you tell us the extent to which the curriculum development and textbook preparation teams

have accepted your theoretical understanding? Have you experienced any contextual constraints, or diluted your position?

**KNA:** I have worked for the curriculum and textbook revision of SCERT Andhra Pradesh, with experts such as Rama Kant Agnihotri and A. L. Khanna. I personally believe that the revised textbooks of Andhra Pradesh have moved away from skill-based pedagogy to discourse-based pedagogy.

**PKJ:** How do you wish to carry out your agenda at the national level?

**KNA:** There are a lot of challenges ahead of us. I understand that similar initiatives are taking place across the world. There are market-driven forces that work for corporate demands in education. There are also forces that promote linguistic imperialism. I join hands with all those who work against these forces.

**P. K. Jayaraj** is an ELT expert at the Regional Institute of English, South India, Bengaluru. He has contributed to the development of the state curriculum, and the production of text books in English for the States of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. He has published three books in English for Mathrubhoomi publications. They are: *Say What You Mean*, *Grammar and Grammar Wars*, and *When Words Bloom*.

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# Landmarks

## Theory and Practice of Language Teaching in India

*Kapil Kapoor*

India has a long pedagogical tradition in language teaching. Of the six Vedangas (sciences auxiliary to the study of Vedas), four are devoted to language – phonetics, grammar, etymology and prosody/metre.

Education, particularly early education was built around two disciplines, language and mathematics, as the primary goal of Indian education was to produce virtuous (discriminating) minds and for that the first requirement is to develop and sharpen cognitive processes. So education was centered around language and mathematics and language teaching was centered around grammar because grammar develops cognitive and analytical abilities. Indian thinkers thought of education as a whole and located it in the moral and virtuous growth of individuals and society.

The issue of how language was institutionally taught in India - one of the world's longest lasting oral cultures and societies - cannot be discussed except in the two wider contexts of (i) the goal of education, and (ii) the place of language in Indian society.

We recall that India has the world's most ancient system of knowledge<sup>1</sup> and education. Takshashila University was destroyed in 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century. We do not know when it had come into being but going by the galaxy of thinkers (Ashvaghosha, Caraka, Kautilya, Panini, Sushruta to mention only a few) and sciences that originated there (phonetics, grammar, medicine, surgery, branches of Buddhism, to count a few) one may say that Takshashila must

have existed for quite a few millennia before it perished. The general Indian educational practices were founded on the following assumptions:

- (1) central role of memory
- (2) centrality of the teacher as the agent
- (3) the text (oral or written) as the instrument
- (4) the training of the mind as the instrument of knowledge that was designed to shape thinking (virtuous) minds.

In this way, language learning and teaching is the keystone of the arch. Language<sup>2</sup> is central to India's intellectual history<sup>3</sup>. As knowledge is the supreme purifier (*Bhagavadgita*, 4.38) and is inseparable from language<sup>4</sup>, language understandably, has been the central object of inquiry and of sustained and intense investigation in all Indian schools of thought. It has been studied in its two aspects — its *svarupa*, form, and its *samarthyā*, potential to denote/connote. In a remarkable analogy, language, *shabda* is compared to *dipaka*, lamp (*Vakyapadiya* I, 44, II.298-299) – when it is lighted, it reveals itself and also reveals other associated meanings – it is the object to be grasped (*grahya*) and the means of grasping objects (*grahaka*).

The Indian conception of language differs in three ways from the Western:

- (i) language is speech, not writing (script);
- (ii) language is a cognitive system (not, primarily, of communication) and,
- (iii) language is a constructivist system (not a representational system).

All the three Sanskrit words for language, *bhasha*, *vak* and *vani*, denote the 'sound-substance' of language. The most significant effect of this assumption was the rise of phonetics as the first science in India and the sophisticated phonetic analyses achieved in the tradition. Panini's grammar is also founded on this assumption. The other two assumptions concern the philosophy of language and are relevant here in so far as they encourage a certain plurality and tolerance of different ways of thinking and believing<sup>5</sup>.

The assumptions about the nature of language inspired a long line of thinking about the relationship between language, thought and reality and governed the teaching of language. Under the two aspects of object (*grahya*) and means (*grahaka*), and the three divisions of language - substance, form and the potential of words to denote/connote - lay the objects of language learning/teaching<sup>6</sup>.

The theory of language, (*bhasha*, *vak* and *vani*), enshrined in linguistic texts such as *Ashtadhyayi*, *Mahabhashya*, *Vakyapadiya* and *Upanishads*. A *Rgvedic* chant says - "May my speech rest in mind and may my mind rest in truth". In one of the *Upanishads*, the human body is compared to the divine lute suggesting that speech ought to be musical.<sup>7</sup>

In Indian language teaching theory, language is best taught and learnt by teaching the grammar of the language which includes the best specimens of that language as examples. Patanjali in the first *ahnika* of his *magnum opus*<sup>8</sup> describes and argues the method of teaching grammar. He defines grammar as 'a short precise enumeration of *lakshana* (markers or rules) of *lakshya* (language use or performance)'. A Grammar according to him consists of general rules (*vidhi*), exception rules (*nishedha*), *uddharana* (examples) and *pratyuddharana* (counter examples). Such a *shastra*, teaching text, is the economical means

of learning a language because language, being open ended, it cannot be learnt by the method of learning words and sentences one by one. Should we teach by prescribing (*vidhi*) 'the right or acceptable usage' or by proscribing (*nishedha*) the variant usages? He asks and answers we should teach the acceptable usages for the universe of variation is endlessly large.

The teaching-learning of language was primarily in the oral frame-work as language was basically understood as speech and the writing practice followed speech as a secondary activity. Indian definition of intellect, *prajna*, being *smriti* + *vimarsha* + *prayoga* (memory + permuting what is in the memory + use at the right time), students were expected to memorise examples of good, thoughtful or musical compositions in that language. They later went on to hold the whole texts in their mind<sup>9</sup>.

A great controversy has raged in the Indian grammatical tradition, from Patanjali through Buddhists to Kumarila Bhatta, which bears directly on the question of the role and place of grammar in language pedagogy. Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* is not a pedagogic grammar in the strict sense - it is a linguistic grammar that makes explicit the native speaker's knowledge of Sanskrit. But this 'knowledge' is the knowledge of *sadhu shabda* the 'acceptable' forms - the 'rules' that embody this knowledge generate the acceptable variety of language, both written and spoken. Now this 'norm', if one may use this term, in Panini is an internally complex norm - the language generated is not equal to any one actual 'dialect' of Sanskrit. And yet it is a 'preferred' form and a whole lot of dialectal variants are *asiddha*. On what justifiable grounds can we exclude those words that are widely employed and as successfully communicate their meaning as the *sadhu shabdas*? This is the crux of the controversy. The grammarians (Patanjali and Bhartrihari) argue that this precisely is the function of grammar - to lay down restriction (*niyama*).

What are excluded are *asadhu* forms and the *shishtas*<sup>10</sup>, the cultured, do not use them. But the Buddhists disagree - “only an indistinct sound, or single letters, or a conglomeration of letters without any reference to their signification...that can be said to be incorrect/unacceptable (*asadhu*)...the vernacular words, *gavi* and the like are found to be capable of denoting the cow as well as the Sanskrit word *go*...in fact are quicker ...in their action of denoting...are used more commonly...they cannot but be recognised as correct...”. But if this position is accepted, how does one justify the discipline of grammar? It is interesting to understand the grammarian’s response which defines and extends the domain of grammar as a science. And as, Bhartrihari argues, variation makes sense only because there is a traditionally recognised and recognisable norm which constitutes the domain of grammar. Buddhists are, understandably, variationists and they argue that *sadhutva* is determined by expressiveness - a word that conveys a meaning is *sadhu* and one that fails to is *asadhu*.

So, the Buddhists say, “... we should make use of all words; they are all equally correct.” (Ganganatha Jha 1983: 298). To support this, they forward a number of arguments: (1) the words *gavi*, *goni* are equally expressive of *cow* because they are used in that sense like the word *gauh* etc.; (2) since they have a denotation, they are correct (*sadhu*); (3) because they are comprehensible, they are not corruptions; (4) they are also given (*nitya*) in that their beginning is not known; (5) no transcendental result follows from the use of *sadhu* words - the result is exactly the same, denotation of an object; (6) grammar is not necessary for the use of words because usage precedes grammar (Ganganatha Jha 1983: 298). Besides, it is argued that because grammar does not have the form of the Veda, because it does not deal with the subjects that are treated of in the Veda, and because the Veda is found to express a meaning even without the

help of grammar, grammar is not rooted in the Veda and therefore does not have the same authority. In fact its status is no different from that of a drama or a story or the words of a human being. (Ganganatha Jha 1983:298-299)

Therefore, it is concluded that the words *gavi*, *goni*, *gauh* &c., being synonymous are all found to be used in ordinary speech, and that such usage cannot be prohibited particularly when we note that such forms are used by even the eminent grammarians (Ganganatha Jha 1983:272), and many excellent writers and even the Veda are found to be using words at variance with the rules of grammar. (Ganganatha Jha 1983: 271-272).

Patanjali distinguishes between the principal purpose and the ancillary purposes of the science of grammar. Apart from questioning the chief enterprise of separating acceptable and unacceptable forms, the Buddhists also deny the auxiliary purposes of *raksha* (defence), *uha* (interpretation), *laghava* (economy), *asandeha* (removal of doubt), *agama* (study of Veda), etc. We are here concerned only with the principal function of establishing the acceptable forms. If the Buddhist position is accepted, grammar ceases to have any function at the level of lexical usage. Patanjali had argued and subsequently Bhartrihari had reinforced the position that when *loka* is authority and in the *loka* all kinds of variants are successfully employed, what the grammar does then is to lay down *dharmaniyama*. *Niyama*, according to Mimamsa, means ‘restriction’ - restricting the choice to one of the available possibilities, just as furniture can be made of all kinds of wood but teak is to be preferred; hunger can be assuaged by eating the flesh of any animal but the flesh of only some animals is to be eaten; all water is water but only *ganga* water is auspicious; all colours are colourful but only some are soothing. In a speech situation, the intended meaning may be conveyed by (1) a ‘standard’, form or (2) any of the dialectal

variants or (3) an erroneously articulated or deviant (*apabhramsa*) form. In this situation, grammar lays down a restriction - the standard form is to be preferred. As stated by Bhartrihari, while meaningfulness is common to all the three choices, *dharmajanakatva*, the property of 'linguistic righteousness', 'being generative of *dharma*' belongs only to the 'norm'. What is this *dharma*? There is reason to think that *dharma* here is to be taken in its civilised and cultured (*sastraic*) sense of consisting in such actions as bring about a desired result which in language transaction is the successful transfer of meaning and it is the function of grammar to lay down *niyama* - this is *dharmaniyama*, restriction laid down for an efficacious transfer of meaning. As Kumarila Bhatta notes, discrepancies may arise in the use of variants. This *sadhu* form one can infer from Bhartrihari's discussion, is an extant form, is widely in use, is historically older being one from which the *apabhramsha* forms can be shown to have developed. (*Vakyapadiya* 1.23, 148). In keeping with the principle of *ekatva*, the many variants are manifestations of one. Three kinds of such variants, *apabhramshas*, are noted (first by Patanjali) in the tradition: *mleccha*, *apashabda* and *dushta shabda*. There is some division of opinion about what they exactly stand for (see, Ganganatha Jha 1983: 270) and without getting into details one may define these as follows:

- (1) *mleccha prayoga* is the usage of the non-native speakers, the language of the foreign countries, of the lands that lie outside the limits of Aryavarta;
- (2) *apashabda* is any of the dialectal variants; and
- (3) *dushta shabda* is an inaccurate or deviant usage caused either by physical infirmity or ignorance.

Grammar establishes *sadhu* words as *siddha* and *asadhu* words as *asiddha* for it is a learned discipline and as such it records the tradition of

usage of the 'educated', the 'cultured' and the 'learned', that is the *sistas*. This is the *dharma* of grammar and of a good man. When one can achieve one's purpose by both *shabda* and *apashabda*, the man of virtue employs *shabda*.

It remains to be reiterated that this debate about the function of grammar is strictly with reference to the product of the rules of grammar, that is the forms that are shown to be *siddha*. There is no dispute about the other function of grammar, namely to describe the structure of language or about its pedagogical use.

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> We have the world's first book on statecraft, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), the first book on prosody, the world's first grammar of a natural human language, Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* (7<sup>th</sup> century B.C) and the world's first text of interpretation, Yaska's *Nirukta* (9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), the first to conceptualise the numerals, zero and the value of p, to count a few peaks.

<sup>2</sup> The need to maintain the Vedic Knowledge texts was the original impulse for linguistic studies. Maintenance of texts in the oral tradition depended on a complete understanding of (i) the phonetics of speech, and (ii) the morphology of continuous utterances (*samhita*), which in turn depended on (iii) an understanding of meanings of utterances/words. This accounts for the rise of the sciences of phonetics, grammar and etymology (*Nirukta*) respectively in the pre-Paninean period.

<sup>3</sup> So central is language to the Indian mind that four of the *Vedangas* are devoted to one or the other aspect of language— *shiksha*, phonetics, *Nirukta*, etymology or exposition of word meaning, *chhanda*, prosody or metrics and *vyakarana*, grammar. Of these, says Patanjali, *vyakarana*, grammar is primary (Patanjali, *Mahabhashya* I.1), because as Bhartrihari asserts, grammar is the grand ladder, *siddhi sopana*, to a true understanding of language.

<sup>4</sup> Bhartrihari, *Vakyapadiya* I.123

<sup>5</sup> Speech rests in a human speaking voice and as such no truth-claim is asserted about what is said as the source of utterance is always identifiable as the individual consciousness. The speaking voice is an individual voice and not *the* Voice, there is no one God and there is no one Voice. This enables a multiplicity of points of view. This is linked to the second postulate – language is a cognitive system and not just a system of communication. As explicated by Bhartrihari, language is the form that knowledge takes and therefore language is indistinguishable from intelligence (*sanjna*) and consciousness (*cetana*) (*Vakyapadiya* 1.126). What grammar, *Vyakarana*, studies and describes is the 'language in the mind', the system that is shared by all the speakers of that language. Thirdly, and finally, language is a constructivist system. As all *cognition* (*bodha*) takes the form of language, reality that is cognized by us is, therefore, necessarily a linguistic construct. Language is not a system that 'names'

some pre-existing reality, but one that constructs the reality that we claim to be out there. The grammarians say that it is through naming that the objects, outside the mind and inside, are cognized as separate or different<sup>5</sup> from each other creating for us this *itiamnaya*, 'this enumerable universe' (*Vakyapadiya* 1.120).

<sup>6</sup> The science of etymology or exposition of words, *nirvacana*, is an interface discipline between phonetics, grammar and meaning as it studies/fixes the meaning of words in terms of their derivation from given verb-roots in the course of which the sound form undergoes changes. Going to the root of words to get what they mean is an established pedagogical practice.

<sup>7</sup> Considering all this, look at the decline in public speech these days, the violence, the abusiveness and the untruthfulness that we hear all around. Language is used now to conceal the truth and promote discord.

<sup>8</sup> *Mahabhashya* Pratham Ahnika, Pashapashahnika.

<sup>9</sup> That is the configurational process of knowledge in the oral culture.

<sup>10</sup> A *shishya* is defined as "one whose worldly goods are constituted by a jar of grain and who, without a worldly goal or purpose, devotes himself to a branch of learning and excels in it".

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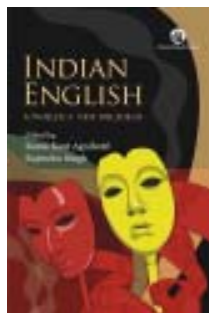


# Book Reviews

## **Indian English: Towards a New Paradigm**

R.K. Agnihotri &  
Rajendra Singh (Eds.).  
2012 New Delhi: Orient  
BlackSwan,  
ISBN: 978-81-250-4371-3,  
pp. 336

*Reviewed by: **Rajesh Kumar***



The subtitle of this edited volume modestly suggests that it presents a new paradigm in the study of Indian English. However, a serious reading of this book reveals that it sets a benchmark for the study of Indian English in particular, and the study of English in the general; it presents Indian English in a new *avatar* with special reference to the concept of a native speaker. In fact the concept of a native speaker has been redefined in this book.

The design of this edited volume is extremely innovative. It puts a target paper at the centre, and then looks at the responses to the ideas mentioned in the target paper from various perspectives. The target paper is in section one; the responses to the target paper with grammatical, socio-linguistic, diachronic, cultural, political, philosophical, and pedagogical perspectives in section two; and finally miscellaneous comments and discussions in section three. The target paper is extremely provocative in its approach towards the treatment of Indian English and the question of a native speaker. According to the main argument of the paper, Indian English is part of the linguistic ecology of India, just like any other language of India. Questioning the concept of a 'non-native speaker', Singh examines it from a social as well as a linguistic point of view.

According to him, English must be looked at from the point of view of 'English of India'. He asserts that the study of English in terms of 'English in India' subsumes the application of the concept of a native speaker in the sense that English in India is essentially the English of non-native speakers.

The responses to the target paper are varied and intense. R. Amritavalli, Rajesh Bhatt, Rakesh Bhatt, and Colin Masica respond to the questions raised by Rajendra Singh from a grammatical perspective. Amritavalli examines the idea of English with reference to Universal Grammar and First Language Learning. She also examines English in the light of multilingualism. Rajesh Bhatt substantiates Singh's argument that the study of English with reference to the distinction between native and non-native speakers is not tenable. Rakesh Bhatt points out that the typical features of Indian English are peculiar only in the sense that such peculiarities exist in all varieties of English. Masica investigates the historical significance of English, adding a new dimension to the study of English. Agnihotri reiterates and substantiates the point that the classification of languages with native and non-native labels does not add much value to the study and our understanding of language, since in both contexts there does not seem to be much difference as far as the structure of the language is concerned. Though Indian English is a legitimate variety of English, Langue holds the native and non-native distinction worthy of a full length debate. Falling in the same line and finding native and non-native contexts relevant in the area of multilingualism, Shreesh Chaudhary also finds the distinction significant. However, for Backus, the native and non-native distinction is part of a continuum.

Mesthrie does not sound convinced with the idea of a continuum though. He argues that the 'caught' and the 'taught' comprise the two obvious approaches to learning a language. Ritt finds the native and non-native distinction significant enough for an empirical research on the subject. In his opinion, native intuition is directly correlated with the speaker's grammatical judgment and, Singh's proposal may be problematic for an empirically sustainable position. Lele finds Singh's position subject to a critical analysis vis-à-vis power and hegemony. Rajgopalan's response to Singh's position on Indian English and the question of a native speaker is in total contrast with that of Langue and Chaudhary. Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn on the other hand is in agreement with Chaudhary that some of these questions must be examined in the context of multilinguality and speech community. A careful reading of the response suggests that Singh does not appear to leave the contexts of multilinguality and speech community out. Dickinson is uncomfortable with Singh's claim that the speakers of Indian English are competent speakers of that variety.

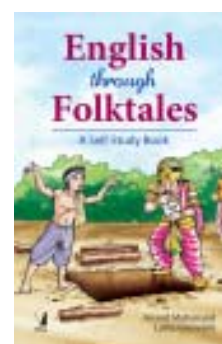
This book is a unique example of an extremely well presented compact argument. It combines a large variety of responses to a stand adopted in the target paper. The last section of the book is again uniquely innovative in the sense that it gives a summary of the questions asked from Singh and his responses to all of them.

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### **English through Folktales: A Self-Study Book.**

by Mahanad, Anand & Goswami, Lalita (2011)  
New Delhi: Viva Books.  
ISBN: 978-81-309-1472-5,  
pp. 97

*Reviewed by: Kamal Kumar Choudhary*



This book consists of sixteen folk tales from different parts of India. It is written in very easy language, and some scenes of the story are depicted through pictures, which makes it interesting for the children. As the authors point out, this book, intended for middle school children, is designed to improve not only the basic skills of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening), but also teaches them the basic grammatical structures. To meet this goal, each story is followed by different exercises (notes, comprehension questions, language study and communication skills). Notes give the word-meanings (difficult words in the text), and also demonstrate the use of a particular word in a sentence. Following this, there are comprehension questions based on the story. This is followed by language study and communication skills. Thus, this book is really good for improving English, particularly for children. The stories are interesting to read, and at the same time, they also improve the language skills of the children.

Learning English in a country such as India is important both for children and adults. It has been observed that the students who have studied throughout in Hindi or a regional language, face several problems when they join college or an institute, particularly if the courses are offered in English. Even in institutes such as IITs, remedial classes are offered to 1<sup>st</sup> year students, as some of them really face problems

in following the lectures. There are several methods of language teaching, and in the past decades, various materials and methods have been developed. But the role of folk tales in teaching a language remains unbeatable. I believe that teaching through folk tales will definitely be fruitful. Therefore, this kind of a book can be really important for children since the stories are interesting, and they can be easily understood. Further, it will also improve the vocabulary and usage of different words/phrases. The exercises provided are good, and will definitely help children improve their English. Also, since most of the stories are known to people, it becomes easy to understand the language.

The stories selected in this book are good and interesting too for children. It would have been better if the level of these stories had been taken into consideration. The elementary nature of some of the stories may have an adverse effect on the total impact of this book. Further, the exercises provided are not consistent. For example, all the chapters do not have only four tasks (as mentioned above), some chapters also include critical appreciation, written skills, etc.; and some chapters do not include language skills. Therefore, these exercises should have been made more systematic. These points can definitely be improved in the future editions. The book fills a gap in pedagogical materials available for teaching a language.

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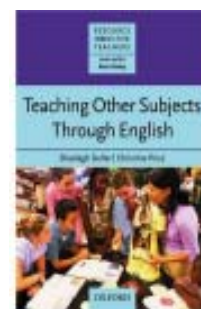
### **Teaching Other Subjects through English**

by Sheelagh Deller & Christine Price, 2007.

London: OUP, 168 pages, paperback

ISBN: 978-0-19-442-578-0, pp. 168

*Reviewed by: **Ramesh Kumar Mishra***



The rise of English as a world language has led to its increasing acceptance as a medium of education at different levels. The contribution of British imperialism and now globalization towards this phenomenon is well documented. Sheelagh Deller and Christine Price, in their book “Teaching Other Subjects through English,” emphasize on the use of English in teaching and learning of different subjects and in various classroom situations. The book particularly uses the framework of the “Content and Language Integrated learning” to demonstrate how school teachers can use English as a medium of instruction to train pupils in different subjects. In contrast to conventional methodologies of teaching a language, CLIL gives prominence to the complete involvement of the learner in the acquisition process where interaction in the language is considered pivotal. This means, one must be able to think and conceptualize successfully in English while indulging in the teaching of different subjects. Most teachers whose native language is not English, find it difficult to teach subjects in English, for they lack proficiency in the language. This book systematically introduces several teaching strategies across a range of subjects that such teachers can use while interacting with students. Thus, this is a resource book for those teachers who teach in an English medium school, and who would like to enhance their teaching proficiency

in using English for teaching different subjects.

One of the hallmarks of human language is the infinite flexibility it offers to its users for communicating abstract thoughts. This is of primary significance for teaching and learning of concepts. Thus, while teaching a subject using a language, one needs to use the language in such a way that one is optimally able to communicate the subject matter with the students. This not only requires an expertise in the grammar of the language, but also a deep understanding of its functionality. Deller and Price demonstrate this in several chapters that are dedicated to the use of English in the learning of different subjects while at the same time demonstrating how the teacher can successfully involve the students by giving them a range of classroom activities. The activities will allow the students to get accustomed to the use of English as a medium of expression of ideas relevant to the subject matter. The book is rich with guidelines for teaching different subject matters such as Physics, Art, etc., which I think will provide teachers with tips for successful teaching. The book is useful for both language teachers, as well as teachers who are using English to teach other subjects in schools.

One of the interesting aspects of this book is the use of visual information during teaching to make learning more inclusive. The authors demonstrate how informative visuals can be created to make teaching more precise. The authors show how to ask questions pertinent to the subject matter so that the student can engage in constructive and useful conversation with the teacher. I believe this is an important point that goes beyond just delivering the subject matter. Good teachers are good communicators, and they know how to transfer knowledge through the use of effective discourse techniques. Since this book deals with the use of English as a medium of instruction, it is important that teachers equip themselves with

sufficient knowledge of English to successfully carry out conversations.

Finally, I would like to comment on one of the most novel aspects of this book—how to develop efficient and fruitful activities for the classroom, so that learning becomes intellectually satisfying and informative. Since different subjects require different types of classroom activities, the authors choose different examples to create activity scenarios that can work profitably. In conventional language, these are known as assignments that students do at their own pace. However, an activity is more than just an assignment, and its primary goal may not be to only evaluate and grade, but to also educate the student on how to think creatively about various issues and contribute in their understanding. In many of the pages, the authors advocate group activities that will help students learn how to work collaboratively.

Overall, I think that this is a useful book for teachers who want to learn new skills related to teaching, particularly when they are using English as a medium of instruction. I think, for an Indian audience, this book is quite suitable since for most teachers English is a second and non-dominant language. The book can be a great resource for researchers as well as other professionals who want to know more about novel teaching methodologies.

**Ramesh Kumar Mishra** (PhD, Delhi University) is an Assistant Professor of Cognitive Science at the Center for Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences at the Allahabad University. He works in the areas of Multimodal aspects of language processing, Interaction of language with attentional systems, Cognition in illiterates, Oculomotor control, Visuo-Spatial attention and Speech-language disorders.

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# Suggested Readings

## ***Beyond Training: Perspectives on Language Teacher Education***

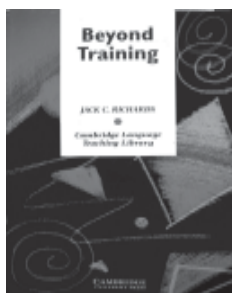
By Jack C. Richards  
Cambridge Language  
Teaching Library Series  
Cambridge University  
Press

First published: 1998

Second printing: 2000

Pages: 208

ISBN 0-521-62680-3 (Paperback)



*Beyond Training* examines the nature of second language teacher development, and how teachers' practices are influenced by their beliefs and principles. Conventionally, 'training' reflects a very technical view of teaching practices whereas Richards, in concerning himself with the beliefs, theories, knowledge and practices of second language teachers, tries to provide a more holistic view of teacher development by focusing on the notion of the *teacher as a critical and reflective thinker*. Until the second half of the 1980s, education was essentially defined as training or delivery of what was known or thought important in teaching second languages. By 1990, the emphasis had shifted to *second language* teacher education. From then on, a distinction was drawn between second language as the *content or subject matter*, and the *processes* of teacher education, within which were the allied processes of

teacher training and development. As noted by Freeman (1998/2000) in his Foreword to the book, "...*training* meant teaching people how to do the work of teaching. Underlying the various surface aspects of delivery, however, lay a rich and complex learning process, the process of learning to teach" (p. vii).

Richards' book takes over from this, and adds further direction by not only explaining the conceptual tools and schemes, but also setting interlinked ideas within an overall structure of development. In the first chapter, he defines the scope of second language teacher education (SLTE) or what has been called the *knowledge base* of second language teaching. The rest of the book is divided into four parts covering i) theories of second language learning, ii) perspectives on teacher thinking, iii) examining teacher education practices, and iv) entering the field of language thinking. Of these parts, the first (chapter 2 and 3) examines two different types of teaching theories that influence teacher beliefs and practices; and also discusses various science-research conceptions, theory and value based conceptions, and art-crafts models of teaching. Chapter 3 particularly examines teacher's implicit theories of teaching, and introduces the notion of 'teacher maxims' (personal working principles that teachers develop, that account for their interpretation of good practice and provide the source for many interactive decisions that teachers make while teaching). The second and the third parts address the nature of teacher thinking (teacher cognition, pedagogical reasoning skills, teachers'



use of lesson plans, etc.), and practices (use of textbook vis-à-vis creative teaching etc.) respectively. The final part of the book describes a study of five novice teachers and the experiences they faced in their first year of teaching, while also offering practical suggestions for the kinds of activities that can be used in teacher-education programmes. Although targeted for teacher trainers in language schools and universities, teachers themselves will also find this book useful given the importance it accords to the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that underlie all teaching practices.

### ***Pictures for Language Learning***

By Andrew Wright

Cambridge Handbooks  
for Language Teachers

General Editor: Michael  
Swan

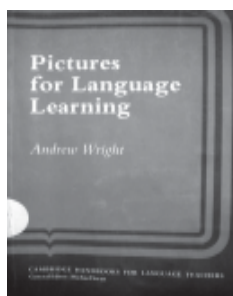
Cambridge University  
Press

First published 1989

Fourth printing 1993

Pages: 218

ISBN 0 521 35800 0 (Paperback)



This resourceful and innovative book provides an immensely valuable insight into the importance of pictures and other visual materials in language teaching. In demonstrating the vital role of pictures in a wide range of language learning situations, the book also underscores the crucial role played by teachers in using innovative and effective teaching methods that can be adapted by them to suit any kind of learner needs. Such innovative use of pictures and visual material in language teaching also

requires limited resources in terms of time for preparation and money or equipment. This richly illustrated book gives concrete examples (chapter 1), of how, for instance, the same picture can be used to emphasize five very different language concepts in teaching (example: grammatical structures, vocabulary, different functions such as requesting, expressing likes/dislikes, etc., describing situations, and honing the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking).

The book is divided into four parts with a total of 16 chapters: Of these, the first section discusses the contributions of visuals towards improving the communication skills of students. Section B emphasizes speaking and writing, and section C stresses listening and reading; together, they have over 200 practical suggestions for picture-generated language work. Section B has various sub-sections dealing with ‘mechanical practice’, communication, and mini dialogue and role-play/simulation. Section C focuses on meaning-making aspects of pictures that can be used to hone listening and reading skills. Wright’s examples are practical in that they make use of readily available visual materials, and where illustrations have been used, these can be easily applied by the teacher.

The final section of the book suggests easy ways in which to set up a ‘picture library’, and offers guidance on how to look for visuals, categorize pictures and how to store pictures so that they can serve as future teaching tools. Language teachers in particular will find the book useful because the activities that Wright describes can be integrated into different levels of language teaching process. Moreover, he provides several pointers as to how to creatively adapt ideas to suit different teaching environments. Chapter 14 lists the types of pictures and their uses (single object pictures, pictures of famous people, pictures of people in action, pictures from history,

fantasies and news, maps, symbols, pairs, texts, sequences, etc.). Chapter 15 deals with creating and adapting pictures. Both these chapters will be useful for their practical applicability as well as tips for preservation and innovative use of pictures in language teaching.

### ***Conditions for Second Language Learning***

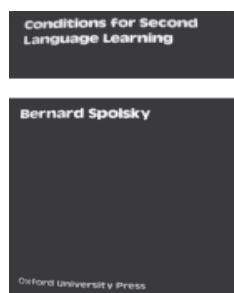
By Bernard Spolsky

First published: 1989

Oxford University Press,  
UK

Pages: 272

ISBN 19 437086 0  
(Hardcover)



Spolsky's book sets out a theory of second language learning in the form of a 'preference model', or a series of typical and categorical rules or conditions. This theory, which he calls *the general theory of language teaching* is distinct from theories of formal classroom learning and of informal natural learning. The task of such a general theory is, as Spolsky notes, being able "to account for the fact that people can learn more than one language, and for the generalizable individual differences that can occur in such learning" (p.2). His theory thus accounts for both, differences between individual language learners, and between different kinds of learning. It is characterized by five features: i) generality (that allows consideration within a single model, second as well as foreign language learning, learning for general and specific purposes, formal and informal learning, developing knowledge and skills etc.) ii) emphasis on goals and outcomes of learning iii) integrated and interactive orientation iv) an 'eclecticism' approach (that recognizes various conditions for language

learning) and lastly, v) acknowledgement of language learning as a social context.

The 'preference model' that Spolsky draws upon, involves the interaction of several clusters of interrelated conditions—he lists as many as 74 conditions that are relevant to second language learning. Of these, the first cluster of conditions relates to second language learning as taking place in a *social context*, and includes components such as the "sociolinguistic situation, the general exposure of learners to other languages, the role of the target language and other languages in the outside community and at home, and the general perception of values of the target language and of bilingualism" (p. 25-26). The second cluster comprises *conditions of the learner* who brings into the learning situation not only motivation, but also a number of capabilities, and a body of previous knowledge and experience. Spolsky underscores the fact that the combination of these learner factors "accounts for the use the learner makes, consciously or unconsciously, of the socially provided formal or informal learning opportunities" (p. 27). The usefulness of this book lies perhaps in the delineation of the major conditions of language learning. The 74 conditions explained over the first 12 chapters include within their purview, multiple factors such as 'knowledge of language'; 'language use'; 'measurement of language knowledge and skills'; 'implication of overall proficiency'; individual/psycholinguistic factors and differences in language learning; 'the linguistics basis for second language' and lastly, the conditions required for learning opportunities. The multiple dimensions utilized in explaining these conditions for second language learning as well as the implications drawn for language teaching is the USP of this book.

***Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology***

Edited by Robert M. DeKeyser

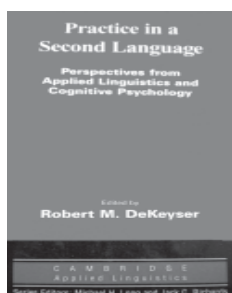
Series Editors: Michael H. Long and Jack C. Richards

First published: 2007

Cambridge University Press, New York

Pages: 323

ISBN: 978-0-521-68404-0 (Paperback)



*Practice in a Second Language* addresses the concept of practice in language teaching from a theoretical perspective. In all the articles in the volume, a number of questions are explored, ranging from what kind of practice is most effective for different kinds of language learners and in what contexts. The 'Introduction' as well as the 'Conclusion' chapters by DeKeyser provide multiple dimensions, and lay out the 'praxis of practice' for the readers. In the Introduction, DeKeyser notes practice to be "specific activities in the second language, engaged in systematically, deliberately, with the goal of developing knowledge of and skills in the second language" (p. 1). He also explains the concept from the perspective of cognitive psychology, educational psychology and applied linguistics. In the concluding chapter, DeKeyser situates the notion of practice within contemporary discourse, and how it is understood in a triple sense: The narrow sense of repeated focused exercises aimed to optimize the retrieval of what one has learned, the slightly wider sense of any kind of L2 use that encourages expansion and fine-tuning of existing knowledge, and the widest sense of any kind of contact with the L2 that may improve its

knowledge at some level. In the same chapter, DeKeyser notes that procedural and not declarative knowledge is the ultimate goal for L2 practice activities. The distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge is well known: in most forms of skill acquisition, people are first presented with *information* such as how to put a sentence in an explicit form; this is called practice in 'declarative knowledge'. Procedural knowledge means the practice through which learners incorporate this information into *behavioural routines*.

The ten articles in the book are spread across three main sections: 'foundations', 'institutional contexts' and 'individual differences'. Of these, language teachers and teacher trainers will find the first four articles on input in L2 classroom, output practice in L2 classroom, and interaction as practice and feedback in L2 learning, particularly useful. The other papers in this book will also be useful given the various cognitive, educational psychology and applied linguistics perspectives that inform them. The importance of individual differences because of age, aptitude, abilities and contexts in second language learning practice is addressed in the papers in the last section of the book.

**Suranjana Barua** has a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Delhi. She is currently working at the Centre for Assamese Studies, Tezpur University, Assam. Conversation/Discourse Analysis, Language Teaching, Gender Studies and Translation Studies are her areas of academic interest.

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# Classroom Activities

## Activity 1: Read Sight Words Fluently

**Note to Teacher:** This is an activity on sight words.

- In all languages, sight words are words that appear with high frequency.
- Often, but not always, sight words are words for which it is difficult to draw pictures/visuals.
- Any text consists of around 60 per cent to 70 per cent sight words.
- Because they come so frequently in texts, it is important that these words be recognized quickly in the process of reading. Automatic recognition of sight words helps students read faster.
- Reading of sight words in a text helps students to experience success in the reading process.
- In teaching sight words, the emphasis is on word recognition.
- Sight words are generally function words. But content words may also be taught as sight words. In the case of content words, ensure that the learners have some sense of their meaning.

Each week, teach at least 15 to 20 sight words. Maintain a record of the words that students find difficult so that these can be specifically targeted in the learning process.

### Objectives

- To be able to read sight words quickly
- To be able to use sight words in sentences

### Materials

- List of sight words (see example below)
- Slips of paper – one sight word written on each slip
- Long string
- A stick/scale

**Scope:** Grades 1 to 3 (the complexity of sight words will increase with the level of each class.)

### Activity for whole class

#### Procedure

- On a long string that runs from one wall to another, attach the sight words (the height should be such that students are able to reach it with the stick/scale).
- Teacher points to a student and calls out a word, e.g. “yaha” (this)
- Student indicates the slip on which the word is written, reads the word and makes a sentence with it.

(When students have learnt to match the called out sight word with its written form, then go to the group activity.)

### Group activity

#### Procedure

- Students are divided into groups.
- Each group is given newspapers/text books/ photocopies of stories.
- The students underline the sight words they have learnt (textbook of math, science and other subjects also have to be used for this activity to convey the message to the

students that these words occur in all types of texts).

**Methods for enhancing this activity may include:**

- Encouraging students to bring their own sight words and making them part of the game.
- Encouraging student groups to create dictionaries of sight words with the words written on one side and a sentence using the word on the other. If possible, the students may draw/cut/paste pictures of that word. This will be a year-long project.
- Creating opportunities for students to play with the dictionary, e.g. each group calls out a word and the other group has to find it.

**Outcome:** Students will be able to read sight words fluently (fast and with understanding).

**List of Sight Words in Hindi: A sample**

A Few Sight Words					
मैं	था	है	थे	मेरा	कम
आप	वह	यह	सब	एक	नीचे
कुछ	उसे	और	उसके	उनके	
हम	कि	अधिक	आना	जाना	
कौन	क्या	क्यों	बाहर	ऊपर	

**Devaki Lakshminarayan** leads the Azim Premji University Research Centre. Before joining the Foundation, she was working with Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore for over 20 years. She possesses a Doctoral Degree in Psychology from the University of Mysore and Masters in Linguistics, from Groningen University, The Netherlands.

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**Activity 2: Communication skills**

**Task 1: Hello! How are you?**

Language function: Greeting someone

Skill involved: Listening, speaking

Type of participation: Pair work

Level: Primary (especially for beginners)

**Objectives**

- To enable the learners to familiarize themselves with their classmates.
- To enable the learners to greet their friends verbally (in English).
- To enable the learners to initiate a telephone conversation in English.

**Materials required:** Two thermocol glasses and a thread.

**Procedure**

1. The teacher teaches the learners how to make a string phone using 2 thermocol glasses and a thread. The learners make this in pairs. The procedure of making a string phone is given below.



- a. Take two paper cups and poke a small hole through the center of the bottom of each cup. The hole should only be big enough for the string to pass through.



- b. Poke one end of the string through one of the cups and tie a knot on the inside of the cup.
  - c. Make the string as long as the distance between you and the other person.
  - d. Poke the other end of the string through the hole in the other cup and tie a knot so it will not pass through the cup.
  - e. Now that you have a cup on each end of the string, the telephone is ready to use.
  - f. Hold the cup to your mouth and talk a little loudly into it. Have your friend hold the other cup to their ear. It is important that you keep the string tight between the cups, and that nothing is touching the string. Now your friend should be able to hear your message through the cup.
2. The teacher demonstrates a telephonic conversation (using a string phone) with another teacher, or with another student.  
 “Hello! My name is Sangeeta. What is your name?”  
 The other person will respond by saying,  
 “My name is \_\_\_\_\_”
  3. Ask all the learners to demonstrate their conversations, with their partners by greeting them and exchanging names using the string phone.
  4. The teacher will encourage the students to continue their telephonic conversation in English by talking about their school, parents, likes or dislikes etc.

USP: The above-mentioned task would enable young learners to familiarize themselves with their classmates: Working in pairs will build the confidence of the learners. Using a string phone made by the learners themselves will surely encourage them to use it for carrying out a telephonic conversation in English.

## **Task 2: My Likes, my friend's likes**

**Language function: Expressing likes**

**Skill involved: Listening, speaking**

Type of participation: Group Participation

Level: Primary

### **Objectives**

- To enable learners to express their own likes verbally (in English).
- To enable learners to express their friend's likes verbally (in English).

### **Procedure**

1. The teacher divides the class in groups of 6-7 learners each. Each group is asked to sit in a circle. The teacher herself also joins a group.
2. Addressing a member of the group, sitting next to her, the teacher asks about his/her favourite clothes. He/she, first, expresses his/her own likes verbally, followed by the likes of another member of the group sitting next to him/her.  
 Example: I like to wear sarees but Krishangi likes to wear frocks.
3. The learners of each group are asked to express their likes with regard to different themes such as food, heroes, games, drinks, cartoon characters, etc. The students express their likes verbally (in English), followed by the likes of an adjacent member of the group.
4. The learners are encouraged to speak in English. The teacher acts as a facilitator by helping the learners wherever necessary.

USP: In the above-mentioned task, learners will be given a chance to express their own likes. Tasks related to the learners themselves increase

their interest, motivation and eagerness to speak the target language. Tasks performed in groups allow the weaker and the shy learners to listen to the better learners, and thus identify and even use the structure correctly while speaking.

**Manu Gulati** is a T.G.T. English in Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi. She is interested in preparing low cost/no cost activities and tasks to improve the English of school children.”

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### Activity 3: Developing Listening Skills Using Songs and Music

**Level:** Upper Primary

**Song:** Home on the Range

#### A. Multiple choice (task to be done while listening to the song)

1. Play the track and let the students listen to it and enjoy it. Alternately, sing the song yourself if you know it.
2. Play the song again.
3. Students have to tick the words as they keep listening to the song. (Individual work)
4. Students can share their answers with their partners and write the correct words from the song.
5. Play the track again and let the students sing along.

*Oh give me a home where the buffalo groan/  
roam*

*Where the deer and the antelope play/play*

*Where seldom is heard a discouraging/  
encouraging word*

*And the skies are not cloudy all day*

*Home, home on the range*

*Where the deer and the antelope play*

*Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day  
Where the air is so pure and the zephyrs  
so free/green*

*And the breeze is so balmy and white/light*

*I wouldn't exchange my home on the range*

*For all of the cities so bright/tonight*

*How often at night when the heavens are  
bright*

*With the light from the glittering/glimmering  
stars*

*Have I stood there amazed and asked as I  
glazed/gazed*

*If their glory exceeds that of ours.*

#### B Fill in the blanks (task to be done while listening to the song)

1. Play the track and let the students listen to it and enjoy it.
2. Play the song a second time.
3. While listening, students have to write the correct words in the blank spaces to complete the song.

Play the track again and let the students sing along.

Oh give me a home where the buffalo \_\_\_\_\_

Where the \_\_\_\_\_ and the antelope \_\_\_\_\_

Where seldom is heard a \_\_\_\_\_ word

And the skies are not \_\_\_\_\_ all day

Home home on the \_\_\_\_\_

Where the deer and the antelope play

Where seldom is heard a discouraging word

And the skies are not cloudy all day

Where the air is so \_\_\_\_\_ and the

zephyrs so \_\_\_\_\_

And the breeze is so balmy and \_\_\_\_\_

I wouldn't \_\_\_\_\_ my home on the range

For all of the cities so \_\_\_\_\_  
How often at night when the heavens are bright  
With the light from the \_\_\_\_\_ stars  
Have I stood there amazed and asked as I  
\_\_\_\_\_  
If their glory \_\_\_\_\_ that of ours.

**C Sequencing (task to be done after listening to the song)**

1. Cut out each line of the song and put the slips in an envelope. Alternately, cut out the paragraphs.
2. Divide the class into groups.
3. Distribute an envelope with slips to each group.
4. The students have to rearrange the sentences/paragraphs to complete the song.
5. Each group can sing the paragraphs in sequence to complete the song.

Home on the Range© Classic Country Lyrics,  
written by Gene Autry, Dan Kelley, Brewster  
Highley  
Activities © Falguni Chakravarty

**Falguni Chakravarty** is a freelance Cambridge **ESOL-CELTA** certified ELT Consultant, Teacher Trainer and Textbook writer with many titles published by leading publishers to her credit. Besides writing, she also provides in-service training to Primary teachers in urban and rural schools.

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# Report

## Workshop on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation at Ambedkar University, Delhi

May 21- 22, 2012

*Ahvaan Group\**

In collaboration with the Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD), the Ahvaan Group (supported by Ahvaan Trust) decided to have a workshop on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) during May 21-22, 2012 at AUD. Based on focus group discussions with more than forty teachers working in various government schools in Delhi, the Ahvaan group realised that CCE was a major concern for all stakeholders in education.

The participants of the workshop included school teachers from various government schools in Delhi, academics, teacher educators from various institutions (SCERT, DIET, Delhi University and AUD), researchers and people working in the area of child rights. The workshop focussed on the following themes:

- Teachers' conception of CCE and their experiences of implementing it
- Understanding the concept of CCE
- Some tools to enable assessment of children's learning.

The purpose of the workshop was to initiate a reflection on the pedagogy and assessment that CCE envisages. In a way, it was a first step to move away from regarding CCE as a 'technique' and to deliberate up on the broader pedagogical concerns it encapsulates – particularly those at the intersection of the ideas of evaluation, the agency of children and teachers, and the relational ethos in schools. The workshop was structured in a way that teachers could share their concerns and experiences of CCE and reflect on questions like: What are the major

shifts (if any) that teachers observe between CCE and the traditional pattern of evaluation? What changes do teachers observe in children's learning with the shift to the new approach to teaching-learning and evaluation? How would they ideally want to assess children in their classrooms? Whether the purpose of 'assessing' is to understand and support learning or is it to 'evaluate' a child?

The first day's sessions involved plenary discussions, focus group deliberations on specific questions, and a presentation on the idea of CCE by an academic who has worked at policy levels in the area of assessment. The deliberations of the first session brought to the fore several concerns that teachers have and the confusions they encounter while implementing CCE. The implementation of the RtE Act in schools mandates a need to change from the traditional evaluation pattern to what is called the continuous and comprehensive approach to assessment. The manner in which the mandate has been communicated to schools, has created a situation of flux and confusion among the teachers. Teachers are under pressure to hurriedly implement CCE without fully understanding the objectives and without the training and resources required.

The present situation makes teachers feel that the traditional system of examinations is being dressed up in a new set of terminology of (formative and summative assessment, scholastic and co-scholastic domains, and the like) instead of the necessary holistic shift in approach to assessment. It would appear that

even academic authorities lack an understanding of CCE. In these circumstances, the work of a teacher is limited to that of mechanically maintaining different kinds of records and registers, instead of thinking about teaching-learning and assessment in a comprehensive fashion. Further, the limited infrastructure, the high pupil teacher ratios in many schools and the burden of covering the syllabus and compiling these registers, constrain them from reflecting on CCE and realizing their pedagogic imaginations. As a result, there is a huge gap between how CCE (or for that matter any change) has been conceptualised and how it is being implemented.

These discussions were taken forward in the second session by identifying some of the broad concerns CCE seeks to address – the psychological burden, the increasing competitive and commercialised ethos in education, the lack of freedom and equity, and the contradictions of ‘objective’ assessments. The assessment systems followed at the University levels and in other countries were also discussed, particularly to highlight the overall educational experience of a learner and its emotional and intellectual impression on her personality. From the first day’s sessions it emerged that although teachers appreciate the vision of CCE, the conditions in which they work do not allow them to be able to ‘implement’ or practice it properly.

The second day’s session began with a reflection on some real life assessment situations to gauge how they matched the concept of CCE. It was stressed that the manner in which CCE is being implemented in schools at present, compromises the whole CCE approach. The changes that CCE envisions were discussed through the specific instance of the switch from report cards to children’s cumulative records/portfolios.

The following session pursued the idea of ‘shift’ in some more detail. The participants reflected on the ‘shifts’ they have experienced in

teaching-learning at school over the past decade or so. These discussions brought-out that in essence CCE is not a ‘new’ way of assessment – many teachers have been practicing assessment in the way CCE expects them to. However, the difference is that the teachers can now formally use such assessment.

Further in the session, through the sharing of teachers’ everyday experiences, the group engaged in debates which are central to the ethos of assessment practices, or rather the whole pedagogic environment in schools, but are often considered to be peripheral in discussions on CCE. These related to democracy, equity and agency of a child. As a particular instance, the participants deliberated extensively, on the practice of corporal-punishment in schools. This discussion brought out the complicated relational ethos in schools, and how it is difficult to discuss and situate CCE ignoring this ethos. It was also felt that without understanding child as a partner in learning and creating democratic teaching-learning spaces, the vision that a humane assessment approach entails could not be realised.

The session following these discussions, focussed on the various ways of understanding a child’s learning and some possible tools that could facilitate these processes. These tools included observations and teacher-made schedules for observation, dialoguing with and listening to children, anecdotal records, peer appraisal, the teacher’s diary, written assessment and the child’s portfolio. The particular feature of these tools was that these were developed by researchers and teachers in actual classroom situations. The focus was not to present ‘model’ tools for replication, but to share some real-life exemplars used for understanding and supporting learning. The contextual design, purpose and nature of these tools were specific reference points in these presentations.



The workshop, in general, created a space where teachers along with some other stakeholders in school education could collect their experiences of evaluation and assessment practices and reflect on them as a community. It also engaged with the basic philosophy of CCE and ways of approaching the goals of CCE. The workshop concluded with the expectation that these discussions would be explored further. It was proposed that the work on CCE would continue with more specific focus on the ways of assessing learning and practicing CCE. The hope was expressed that Ahvaan and AUD will continue to deliberate on aspects of the quality of education and engage with a larger community of teachers to take these issues forward.

*\*The Ahvaan Group consists of government school teachers, academics and researchers which has been working over the past one year to understand and improve the quality of education in the government school system.*

## Call for Papers

### Language and Language Teaching

*Language and Language Teaching (LLT)* is a peer-reviewed periodical. It is **not** an *ELT* periodical. It focuses on the theory and practice of language-teaching and English is only one of the languages one might consider. Since there are already many journals devoted to ELT, we particularly welcome articles dealing with other languages.

Papers are invited for the forthcoming issues. Please follow the Guidelines given in the current issue. The references must be complete in ALL respects, and must follow the APA style sheet. Papers may address any aspect of language or language-teaching. They **MUST** be written in a style that is easily accessible to school teachers, who are the primary target audience of this periodical. The articles may focus on the learner, teacher, materials, teacher training, learning environment, evaluation, or policy issues. Activities focusing on different languages are also invited. The article must be original and should not have been submitted for publication anywhere else. A statement to this effect must be sent along with the article.

***No paper should exceed 2000 words including references and the bio-note of the contributor. The bio-note should not exceed 25 words.***

Last date for the submission of articles:

January Issue: October 30

July Issue: April 30

Articles may be submitted online simultaneously to the following email IDs:

*agniirk@yahoo.com*

*amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com*

*jourllt@gmail.com*

*They may also be posted to:*

Vidya Bhawan Society

Fatehpura, Udaipur 313004

Rajasthan, India

# Forthcoming Events

## August 2012

### **PROMS2012: Rasch Family: Theory, Method and Practice**

Dates: August 6th (Monday) - August 9th (Thursday), 2012

Organization: Pacific Rim Objective Measurement Symposium

Location: Jiaying University, Zhejiang Province, China

### **JACET 2012: The 51st International Convention**

Dates: August 31st (Friday) - September 2nd (Sunday), 2012

Organization: Japan Association of College English Teachers

Location: Aichi Prefectural University, Nagakute City, Aichi Prefecture.

## September 2012

### **CUE ESP Symposium 2012**

Date: September 8th (Saturday), 2012

Call for papers due: August 31st (Friday)

Organization: College and University Educators Special Interest Group, Japan Association for Language Teaching

Location: Nara Institute of Science and Technology (NAIST), Keihanna Science City

## October 2012

### **The 10th Asia TEFL International Conference**

Dates: October 4th (Thursday) - October 6th (Saturday), 2012

Call for papers due: April 30th (Monday)

Organization: The Asian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language  
Location: Delhi, India

## JALT 2012

Dates: October 12th (Friday) - October 15th (Monday), 2012

Organization: The Annual International Conference of the Japan Association for Language Teaching

Location: Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture

### **GLoCALL 2012: The Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning Conference**

Dates: October 18th (Thursday) - October 20th (Saturday), 2012

Organization: Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Location: Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, China

### **Second Language Research Forum 2012**

Dates: October 18th (Thursday) - October 21st (Sunday), 2012

Call for papers due: April 30th (Monday)

Organization: Second Language Research Forum

Location: Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

### **2012 Pan-Korea English Teachers Association (PKETA) International Conference**

Date: October 20th (Saturday), 2012

Organization: Pan-Korea English Teachers Association

Location: Pukyong National University, Busan, Korea

### **20th KOTESOL International Conference**

Dates: October 20th (Saturday) - October 21st (Sunday), 2012

Call for papers due: May 31st (Thursday)

Organization: Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Location: Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea

### **Fukuoka JALT Conference and Bookfair 2012**

Date: October 28th (Sunday), 2012

Call for papers due: April 30th (Monday)

Organization: Fukuoka Chapter of the Japan Association for Language Teaching

Location: Seinan University, Nishijin, Fukuoka

### **November 2012**

#### **Pan-Asian Conference on Language Teaching and Learning (PAC) 2012**

Dates: November 1st (Thursday) - November 4th (Sunday), 2012

Call for papers due: May 31st (Thursday)

Organization: Pan-Asian Conference on Language Teaching and Learning

Location: Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, Russia

### **May 2013**

#### **CELS Symposium 2013**

Dates: May 27th (Monday) - May 28th (Tuesday), 2013

Call for papers due: September 30th (Sunday)

Organization: The Centre for English Language Communication (CELC), National University of Singapore

Location: National University of Singapore

**January 03, 2013** 5th International Sanskrit Computational Linguistics Symposium (ISCLS) Mumbai Maharashtra

## **Readers' Response**

The topics of the journal are very relevant for a school context. They throw open questions that teachers and leaders at school level should be engaging with. The language used is simple, and can be understood easily. This journal will definitely bridge the gap between academic research and teaching practice.

**Harpeet Kaur**, Curriculum Developer and Teacher Trainer, Bharat National Public School, Delhi

All the authors in the first issue of *Language and Language Teaching* have raised pertinent questions related to school education: literacy, comprehension, exposure, resources, first generation learners, and many others. These are all real issues at the grass root level that the teachers grapple with all the time. Some of the articles suggest ways in which small steps have led to or could lead to better teaching/learning outcomes.

However, I feel that some of the teachers in government schools may need models or training to learn how to employ scaffolding techniques for activating their students' knowledge, or to teach their students to comprehend reading or develop writing skills. If we could get some articles that focus on initiatives or experiments that have been tried out in actual classrooms using different pedagogic techniques, and have drawn upon some of these very relevant suggestions, it would help school teachers immensely in implementing 'tried and tested' techniques.

**Chhaya Sawhney**, Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Elementary Education, Gargi College, University of Delhi, Delhi

The LLT journal is just what we need in terms of the themes dealt with, and the ease and simplicity of the presentation and length of articles, since it can be used as resource material for teacher capacity development during forum meetings and workshops. Difficult and confusing ideas are often described in a lucid manner with lots of examples from ELT. I believe we can find answers to many of our questions in its pages.

**Nivedita Bedadur**, University Resource Centre,  
Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

I am sure this journal has been well received, and will fill a vacuum area.

**Keerti Jayaram** Director, Early Literacy project  
(ELP), Organization for Early Literacy  
Promotion (OELP), New Delhi

I shared the LLT journal with another colleague of mine at school. A few brief comments:

He found the section 'Classroom Activities' useful, saying he always looks for something like that in journals. However, I think if the activities described could also be linked very briefly to the theories of language-acquisition and learning that they support, it would be more useful. Somehow in the current teaching-learning discourse, activities have come to have a life of their own without any adequate rationale for why or how certain activities are helpful or necessary.

Another useful area could be asking teachers to write down specific questions or topics of language learning or teaching, on which they would like more theoretical, research articles. I don't know if a journal like this can entertain such a need. But it would be useful to know what teachers are thinking, and the areas that they need help in.

**Snehlata Gupta**, Lecturer in English at Rajkiya  
Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya (RPVV), Delhi

- 1) Most of the articles focus on the development of four basic skills, especially the communicative skill, which is obviously the need of the hour.
- 2) In both the articles of R. Amritavalli and Sobha Sinha, they discussed how reading could be a part of learning to develop cognitive ability. I like their idea that one should continue reading even if one does not understand the meaning, which is very positive.
- 3) Being sensitive to the young language learner and helping them bring their real world experience into the classroom to make the environment more comfortable for students is a significant point of the article, "Towards a conceptual framework for early literacy: A balanced and socially sensitive approach". It touches the theory of using multiple intelligence and learning styles in the classroom, which looks quite interesting.
- 4) Articles such as "Collaborative spaces on the web and language teaching: Blogs and wikis" can make positive changes in teaching and learning situations. Blogs and wikis are now very popular across the world in the field of education. They seem very effective in the present day situations where we can work collaboratively. I am sure, like me, readers would like to read more articles on the use of technology in the teaching and learning process, and could bring effective changes in the system. After spending almost four months in a university in the US, I think that blogs, wikis, and the use of Internet can bring substantial changes in the teaching-learning environment. I had the opportunity of visiting a high school in the US, where it was encouraging to see how technology, instead of being a distraction, has been used constructively. Undoubtedly, its use depends on the teacher.

- 5) I liked the article written by Shefali Ray that emphasizes on communicative skills and the importance of interaction in a classroom. This would surely open up new ideas to make the classroom more interactive and enjoyable.
- 6) On the whole, the language used in the articles was simple and easy to understand. I just want to say that people are going to use this journal a lot.

**Nabanita Baruah**, Teaches English at Betbari Higher Secondary School, Sivasagar, Assam

It would be good to have key words, shorter paragraphs, and more headings. I do realize that as writers, we have not put headings into our articles, but this could be the 'house style' of LLT, and this could be something that could be added by the editor.

**Joseph Mathai**, Consultant, Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education, New Delhi

The contents look well rounded and very interesting.

**Mukul Priyadarshini**, Associate Professor, Deptt. of Elementary Education, Miranda House, University of Delhi, Delhi

The journal looks very attractive and the contents seem to promise an equally stimulating reading experience. I enjoyed Praveen Singh's article on "Language Teaching in Greek and Roman Times", and Pushpinder Syal's interview of Prof Tickoo.

**Rupin Desai**, Formerly Professor of English, University of Delhi, Delhi

LLT looks good; just what was needed.

**Maxine Bernsten**, TISS, Hyderabad.

LLT's objective to establish a dialogue between theory and practice while focusing on language pedagogy is brought out very well in the articles in the inaugural volume of the Journal. The articles mainly address the issue of language acquisition and literacy, distinguishing it from merely learning to read or write. They talk about cognition, wisdom, vision and imagination, which are all mediated through language. Autonomous learning, and developing the ability to choose the text become the focal points of praxis.

The diversity of strategies proposed by the writers to attain better models in language teaching is not debatable, but my primary concern is whether or not the proposed outcome is achievable. My own personal involvement has been primarily with literature; yet the interest and curiosity that the range of the articles has raised, has certainly added to my constantly evolving engagement with language acquisition concerns. Whether it is the innovative use of traditional art form, or the meaningful exploitation of technology, the play text or the blogs and the wikis, the questions that disturb are related to issues of execution, negotiations and transactions that need concentrated, serious and prioritized attention. The LLT must open discussions on them in the form of symposia.

LLT, I hope, will also focus on the need for developing strategies for teaching language to the visually impaired students in inclusive classrooms. I would like to suggest that there should be a dedicated volume that would focus on the impact of various social disparities, stratifications and socio-economic and political influences on the concerns of language. This would also be able to take care of the need for special approach in communication, in mainstream teaching.

**Chandra Nisha Singh**, Associate Professor, Lakshmi Bai college, University of Delhi, Delhi



## Guidelines for the submission of manuscripts to LLT

1. An MS word version of the manuscripts (with British spellings) should be submitted to the Editors of LLT via email at the address(es) given below:  
*journllt@gmail.com,*  
*agnilrk@yahoo.com,*  
*amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com*  
 If required, the articles may be posted to:  
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